Seeing the forest for the trees: Ontological security and experiences of Tasmanian forests

by

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Declaration of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

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Statement of Ethical Conduct

The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University.

Rebecca Banham _____

Publications

I developed the following publications during the course of this research, and elements of each appear in this thesis. While I am the sole author of these publications, I acknowledge that the suggestions and revisions of friends, colleagues, and reviewers alike greatly improved my work.

Refereed conference papers

Banham, R., 2017. 'A walk among the gum trees': Bushwalking, place and self-narrative, in: Fozdar, F., Stevens, C. (Eds.), *Conference Proceedings of The Australian Sociological Association 2017 Conference*. University of Western Australia, Australia, pp. 116-121.

Banham, R., 2018. Resisting the marginalisation of the non-human: Interdependency, wonder, and humility in Tasmanian forests, in Zajdow, G. (Ed.), *Conference Proceedings of The Australian Sociological Association 2018 Conference*. Deakin University, Australia, pp. 42–48.

Book chapter

Banham, R., 2020 [forthcoming]. Empathetic positionality and the forest other: Perceiving violence against Tasmanian trees, in Milstein, T., Castro-Sotomayor, J. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Ecocultural Identity*. Routledge.

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I also owe massive thanks to the 27 participants of this study. Thank you for donating your time and your incredible insights, and in doing so making this project what it is. I was blown away by the ideas and experiences that you shared with me, and your words (and photos, paintings, poetry!) inspired me so much.

To my friends and family – thank you. You have each encouraged me, listened to me, and loved me; you have asked questions, offered to read my work, shared coffee, flown from interstate, commiserated the difficulties, and made the past three years a better time. My new family have also been the most wonderful of cheerleaders. I am a very lucky person.
And Mum and Dad – you have always been the quiet backbone of me knowing what I could achieve. Love you!
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I dedicate this thesis to the forests of Tasmania, without whose presence and beauty there would be no thesis.
Most of all, this thesis is for Alex. Your endless support is what makes all good things happen in my life. I love you and I like you, and you are written into every page.

Abstract

This thesis explores Tasmanians' experiences of forests. Tasmania has been socially and environmentally shaped by decades of conflict popularly and provocatively termed the 'forestry wars'. In this context, I examine the link between human-forest engagements and 'ontological security' – a sense of familiarity and trust in the world and the self. In critiquing and remodelling Giddens' conceptualisation of ontological security, I argue that forests do important emotional and existential 'work' for people. For most participants, the state's forests symbolised ontological and emotional aspects of ontological security.

Environmental sociology literature often adopts macro-level, realist, and/or quantitative frameworks which privilege themes of self-interest, rationality, or 'quantifiable' experiences of the nonhuman environment. The existing literature regarding Tasmanians' experiences with/in forests is dominated by political, discursive, and historical perspectives which heavily emphasise the construction of environmental conflict. Sociological approaches to this Tasmanian case study are absent. In contrast to these bodies of literature, I explore human-forest engagements through under-examined themes of vulnerability, ontology, emotion, and relationship.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 27 Tasmanians across the state. Eleven participants also contributed materials that they felt represented Tasmanian forests, including photographs, lyrics, and written pieces. Almost all participants were critical and distrustful of Tasmanian forestry politics, management, and practices, expressed concerns about local and global environmental issues, and associated forest experiences with processes of wellbeing, immersion, self-identity, and ontology. Yet participants also expressed ambivalent attitudes about Tasmania's forestry industry. These key findings indicate that Tasmanians' engagements with/in forests are complex, emotionally significant, and are bound up in experiences of identity, ontology, and vulnerability.

These data illustrate Tasmanian forests as symbolic of six key aspects of ontological security: material constancy; routine and ritual; escape and refuge; self-narrative; the nonhuman; and the future. Through these operationalised points, I argue that participants' understandings and experiences of Tasmanian forests reflect the construction and experience of ontological security. This thesis contributes a unique micro-sociological approach to understanding human-forest engagements in Tasmania, and in doing so, undermines the polarising and alienating rhetoric of 'Tasmania's forestry wars'. This research also contributes a reworked model of ontological security, demonstrating the utility of the concept for qualitative research in environmental sociology.

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Introduction

I first visited Camp Florentine in April 2012. Affectionately known as Camp Floz, forest activists established the blockade in Tasmania's south-west Florentine Valley in 2006. The night that my friends and I spent at the camp was cold and beautiful, the mud, trees, and wind coalescing into something raw and elemental. We chatted with the activists and drifters camped there, and they seemed happy to receive us; they soon offered to rig us up with ropes and teach us to scale the trees. There was no space in the cramped camp itself – and it did not seem ours to claim, either – so we pitched our tents twenty metres away, under tall and crackling eucalypts. That night we all sat around the fire, drinking, making conversation, ducking and coughing as the smoke targeted each of us in turn. I was not there as an activist; I was simply a visitor, keeping the forest company for a night.

We visited Floz again six months later, in September 2012. Tasmania's Spring weather is notoriously temperamental, and perhaps that energy was in the air. The blockade housed no activists this time. We still camped under the trees. One week later, local news outlets released images following an arson attack upon Camp Floz. Shocked, I took in the melted tarps, blackened logs, and the twisted frame of an armchair coated in ash. The camp was desolate, broken and destroyed. I suspect my friends and I may have been the last friendly faces to visit Floz, not realising what we were seeing until it was gone.

The whole event has made me wonder about the implication of forests in how people know, want, or fear the world to be. Much of the nonhuman world seems to follow similar patterns –

present, protected, and swiftly destroyed. I think the story of Camp Florentine is an apt metaphor; as Barry (2012: 74) puts it, "it is often only by recognizing the precariousness of something that one comes to a full appreciation of its preciousness". There are relationships with the nonhuman that humans cannot, do not, or choose not to celebrate or articulate. What was it that someone found so threatening about Camp Floz that they felt the need to set it alight? Why do other people care so much about forests, and what is that experience like?

Rationale and research questions

> An actor whose consciousness is limited to ideas or cognitions and lacking in social values or emotions is inconceivable. For this reason, any description, explanation or sociological understanding of a social phenomenon is incomplete, and therefore false, if it does not incorporate the feeling subject into its study of structures and social processes.
>
> Bericat (2016: 495)

This thesis is about human-forest engagements in Tasmania, Australia. It explores the understandings and experiences of 27 Tasmanians from across the state, who became involved due to their personal interest (in whatever capacity) in forests and forest issues in the state. The data from which this thesis draws comes primarily from semi-structured interviews, conducted with all 27 participants. To complement these data, participants were also invited to submit materials in response to the prompt 'what represents Tasmanian forests to you?' Eleven participants contributed to this part of the inquiry.

My reasons for conducting this research are two-fold. One is a desire to contribute a new and much-needed sociological perspective to the decades-long forestry conflicts that have plagued my home state. The other is my fascination with the concept of 'ontological security' – drawn from the work of Anthony Giddens – and an aim to 'reimagine' this concept as an insightful framework for understanding human-forest interactions. This research project combines these two threads of inquiry to argue that forests are never 'just trees' – rather, forests do an incredible amount of emotional and existential 'work' for people. This inquiry sits within the subdiscipline of environmental sociology. Environmental sociologists have often adopted macro-level, realist, and/or quantitative frameworks which privilege themes of self-interest, rationality, or 'quantifiable' experiences of the nonhuman environment. In contrast, I explore human-forest engagements through under-examined themes of vulnerability, ontology, emotion, and relationship. In exploring participants' responses through a framework of ontological security, this research gives language to the complex, abstract, and sometimes difficult to articulate experiences that may emerge at the point of contact between people and forests.

Tasmania's 'forestry wars' have raged for decades, occupying a very significant space in Australian environmental history as the country's most persistent of environmental conflicts (Lester & Cottle 2015). These conflicts have been marked by violence, vitriol, and corruption (Lester 2007; Krien 2012), entrenching a form of social division centred on a question of 'sides': pro-forestry or anti-forestry; pro-development or anti-progress. This social division is neither productive nor accurate and has left many Tasmanians with a sense of deep weariness. Yet, energising Tasmania's environmental history have been stories of defiance, activism, protest,

and blockades, and the genesis of the world's first Greens party (Lester 2007). As Harwood (2011: 246) puts it, "[c]ontroversies over Tasmanian environments are pivotal to Tasmanian subjectivities". In the course of this research, I have spoken to those who consider themselves interested in – even passionate about – Tasmanian forests and forest issues, but these people also often communicated ambivalence, and resisted analytical attempts to pigeon-hole them as belonging to a 'side'.

Tasmania's forestry conflicts represent a long-term and deeply-embedded social problem in the state. A number of authors have tackled this topic, offering investigative, historical, and discursive analyses of Tasmania's environmental politics from a range of viewpoints. I offer a different perspective. In this thesis I contribute a sociological analysis not of forestry politics in Tasmania, but of Tasmanians' forest experiences. This approach – privileging themes of emotion, ontology, and vulnerability – offers insight into what is being miscommunicated, misunderstood, or maligned in Tasmanian forest politics. To better understand Tasmanian society, I 'step away' from the politics to think about the forests themselves. How do these places shape people, and inform experiences of precariousness and existence? I am interested in how people find meaning in their lives, and how this process interacts with nonhuman landscapes and species. While politics and activism are undoubtedly important and impactful, I illuminate alternative perspectives by examining the experiences that inform such processes.

The concept of 'ontological security' is an insightful framework through which to explore these themes. Put simply, ontological security is a "sense of continuity and order in events" (Giddens 1991: 243). It is the trust most people have that the world, and their self-identity, is stable,

predictable, and continuous. I find ontological security fascinating because it speaks to something universal, and deeply emotional: living in and with vulnerability, precarity, and anxiety. How do humans live with an unknown future, where the worst could happen, and the worst is feared? People live knowing that this is the case, but often thrive as if it is not. The universality of vulnerability also fascinates me, as it reflects human capacities to love, connect, and hold concerns. Environmental sociology (and perhaps sociology at large) does not often explore these themes; yet, as Sayer (2011: 8) argues:

> … the connection of ethics or morality to well-being is vital. There are limits to the extent to which we can rationalize or wish away harm, and fabricate a sense of well-being. How people can best live together is not merely a matter of coordination of the actions of different individuals by means of conventions, like deciding which side of the road to drive on, but a matter of considering people's capacities for flourishing and susceptibilities to harm and suffering.

In this thesis, I explore the ways (and to what extent) ontological security is an effective framework through which to understand and articulate 27 Tasmanians' experiences of caring about forests.

Ontological security is a historically and culturally situated process. As Dupuis and Thorns (1998: 43) put it, "while ontological security is complex, in order to understand its nature it is necessary to understand the context in which it is sought". As such, this thesis firmly locates participants' experiences and expressions of ontological security within the Tasmanian context. I suggest that the relationship between forest experiences and ontological security happens

in particular ways in Tasmania. Given the state's turbulent political history, forests are uniquely salient spaces in Tasmania. As such, there is a kind of 'opportunism' in Tasmanians potentially locating a sense of ontological security in forests – that is, that forests are available to Tasmanians as a subject/object with which to interact. Further, Tasmania's environmental history is one of threat: threat to nonhumans, threat to place, and threat to resource management (and, at times, even bodily threat to people). These narratives shape the ways that Tasmanians respond to forest species and ecosystems.

The themes and concepts discussed above come together to inform this inquiry's research questions and aims. The two primary questions that this thesis answers are:

> 1. In what ways are human-forest engagements implicated in the establishment and experience of a sense of ontological security?
>
> 2. In what ways are Tasmanian forests symbolic of (that which contributes to a sense of) ontological security?

In addition to these two questions, there are two sub-questions. These sub-questions helped to direct the themes that I broached with participants during interviews, and aided my analysis and organisation of participants' responses. The two sub-questions are:

> a. How do Tasmanians' understandings of the state's forests reflect and sustain a sense of ontological security?
>
> b. How do Tasmanians experience the state's forests as ontologically significant spaces, and in what ways are emotional and relational experiences implicated in this process?

The findings discussed in Chapter 4 address the first sub-question, while the findings discussed in Chapter 5 address the second sub-question. The aims of the research – particularly as concerned with the representation of rarely enunciated voices, perspectives, experiences, and narratives – are woven throughout the thesis, and particularly Chapter 3. Simply stated, this research aims to explore the personal experiences of ontological security of the study's participants; not on behalf of all Tasmanians or all those invested in forests, but as individuals who engage with Tasmanian forests in their own ontologically significant ways. This chapter has thus far introduced and explained the rationale of this research; the remainder of this chapter provides an overview of the thesis structure, concluding with a brief discussion of the scope and contribution of this inquiry.

Structure

This thesis is in two parts. Part One (Chapters 1-3) establishes the context, concepts, and methodology of the thesis. Part Two (Chapter 4-7) details the research findings, and discusses these findings through a framework of ontological security.

Chapter 1 'sets the scene' for the research. This chapter locates the inquiry in terms of discipline (environmental sociology), and discusses several relevant major theoretical debates within environmental sociology. I then locate the study in terms of the geographical and social context of Tasmanian forests. This chapter provides an overview of Tasmania's environmental history, with a particular focus on two rhetorical devices that shape Tasmanians' responses to forests: 'violence' and 'wilderness'. The chapter concludes by identifying four literature issues and gaps to which this research responds: conflict-centric approaches to the Tasmanian case

study; relational sociology; vulnerability; and ontological security. It is in engaging with these themes that the thesis contributes a new, sociological perspective to Tasmanian environmental history and politics.

Chapter 2 outlines the study's conceptual framework of 'ontological security'. The chapter opens with a discussion and critique of Giddens' conceptualisation, drawing on a review of the literature that explicitly engages with ontological security. On page 76 I provide my own definition of ontological security, as I have applied it in this thesis. Building on Dupuis and Thorns' (1998) operationalisation, I then provide my own six-point operationalised model of ontological security, as it relates to understandings and experiences of Tasmanian forests. The second half of Chapter 2 provides a 'road map' to the concepts, theories, and themes that illustrate the links between ontological security and human-nonhuman engagements, organised by the six operationalised points of my model. The first of these six points is Tasmanian forests as symbolic of 'material constancy', with core themes and concepts of home, materiality, and geographical ontology. Second is Tasmanian forests as symbolic of 'routine and ritual', related to key themes and concepts of routine, rites of passage, and calendrical ritual. Thirdly, Tasmanian forests are symbolic of 'escape and refuge from the surveillance and threats of the contemporary world or built environment', with this point relating to themes of sequestration, wilderness, and wellbeing. The fourth point of the model is Tasmanian forests as symbolic of 'a consistent self-narrative', concerned with themes and concepts of self-narrative (self-identity) and place. Fifth, Tasmanian forests are symbolic of 'the nonhuman, by which ontological understandings are constructed', and this point relates to key themes of human-nonhuman relationships, anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, and ontology. The final point

of my model of ontological security is Tasmanian forests as symbolic of 'responses to the anticipated future', with core themes and concepts of vulnerability, interdependence, and emotion.

The final chapter of Part One – Chapter 3, 'Doing the Research' – details the design and methods of this inquiry. In this chapter I explain the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological concerns that have influenced the conduct of this research project, and the methods through which I have gathered data. I open with a discussion of the social constructionist epistemological stance underlying this research, before describing the influence of symbolic interactionism and phenomenology upon this project. I then outline the four methodological concerns that I feel most prominently shaped the design of this study: the Tasmanian research context; my adopted sampling strategy; my standpoint as a researcher; and the role of language and articulation in this study. The chapter closes with an explanation of the research methods that I employed – semi-structured interviews, and the collection of participant submissions – and the strategies utilised to collate, code, and analyse the data.

Part Two takes the reader on a journey through the forest. In Chapter 4, 5, and 6, the findings of the data are presented by theme, with each section followed by a discussion explicitly linking those themes to the operationalisation of ontological security described above. Chapter 4, 'Before the Forest', explores the definitions, knowledge, interpretations, and concerns that participants formed from 'outside' the forest, which then 'accompanied' the participants during their forest experiences. This chapter presents findings of the specific forested sites that participants spoke about, and their definitions of these places; participants' global and local

environmental concerns; participants' concerns about the management and practices of forestry in Tasmania; and participants' understandings of boundaries and the demarcation of space in Tasmania. These findings primarily link to points 1 (material constancy), 3 (escape and refuge), and 6 (the future) of the operationalised model.

Chapter 5, 'In the Forest', presents the findings that arose from participants' immediate 'forest experiences'. Almost every participant spoke about their recreational (and occasionally occupational) experiences with/in Tasmanian forests, usually in the form of bushwalking (hiking). The embodied, performative, and emotional aspects of these experiences constitute some of the most significant findings of this inquiry. This chapter discusses the process of participants' forest experiences, including preparatory routines, emotional experiences, immersion, and a sense of wellbeing; the relationship between participants' forest experiences and their self-narrative (self-identity); and the ties between participants' forest experiences and their 'big-picture' conceptualisations of existence, human ontology, and vast time spans. These findings reflect all six points of the operationalised model: material constancy; routine and ritual; escape and refuge; self-narrative; the nonhuman; and the future. Chapter 5 contains the most detailed findings of the thesis, reflecting the complex and significant link between ontological security and emotional, existential, and embodied experiences.

Chapter 6, 'After the Forest', presents findings from both the interview data and the materials submitted by participants as representations of Tasmanian forests. The findings of the first half of Chapter 6 emerged from thematic analysis of the interview data, and relate to the creative activities – such as building and design, painting, writing, and photography – that participants

engaged in following their forest experiences. I argue that these activities work to reify or 'make real' aspects of these forest experiences, bringing Tasmanian forests into participants' everyday lives. These findings primarily link to points 1 (material constancy) and 4 (self-narrative) of the operationalised model. The second half of Chapter 6 presents the additional materials contributed by 11 participants. These diverse materials comprise written responses, paintings, a poem, a story, a dance routine, lyrics, and captioned photographs. These findings primarily reflect points 1 (material constancy), 3 (escape and refuge), 5 (the nonhuman), and 6 (the future) of the operationalised model. The findings presented in Chapter 6 – from interview data and participants' submissions alike – illustrate that forest understandings and experiences have an ongoing effect in individuals' lives, long after they leave the vicinity of the forest itself.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis. It opens with a brief summary of the previous chapters, before discussing the ongoing context of Tasmanian environmental politics through the example of a proposed cable car development in Hobart. I identify five forest-related 'rifts' in Tasmanian society – as seen through participants' responses – which illustrate several significant areas of miscommunication and misunderstanding in Tasmanian environmental politics. I then offer answers to the research questions posed above, and discuss the challenges, limitations, and implications of this inquiry. The thesis closes with a statement of the key contributions of this study.

Scope and contribution

The immediate scope of this research is the Tasmanian case study. Participants' responses illustrate many of the themes, (mis)understandings, and (mis)communications that have

created and prolonged the state's 'forestry wars'. I draw on aspects of Tasmania's past to contextualise the present situation in which participants have responded to the state's forests, and use these responses and insights to suggest new perspectives for thinking about Tasmania's future. As these findings are qualitative and draw from a small, self-selected sample, this study does not provide generalisable results. However, Tasmania does not exist in a vacuum, and the empirical and theoretical findings of this research are 'transferable' to other research contexts and environmental sociological studies (see Guba & Lincoln 1994, in Bryman 2016). This research contributes a unique micro-sociological approach to understanding human-forest engagements in Tasmania and in doing so, undermines the polarising and alienating rhetoric of 'Tasmania's forestry wars'.

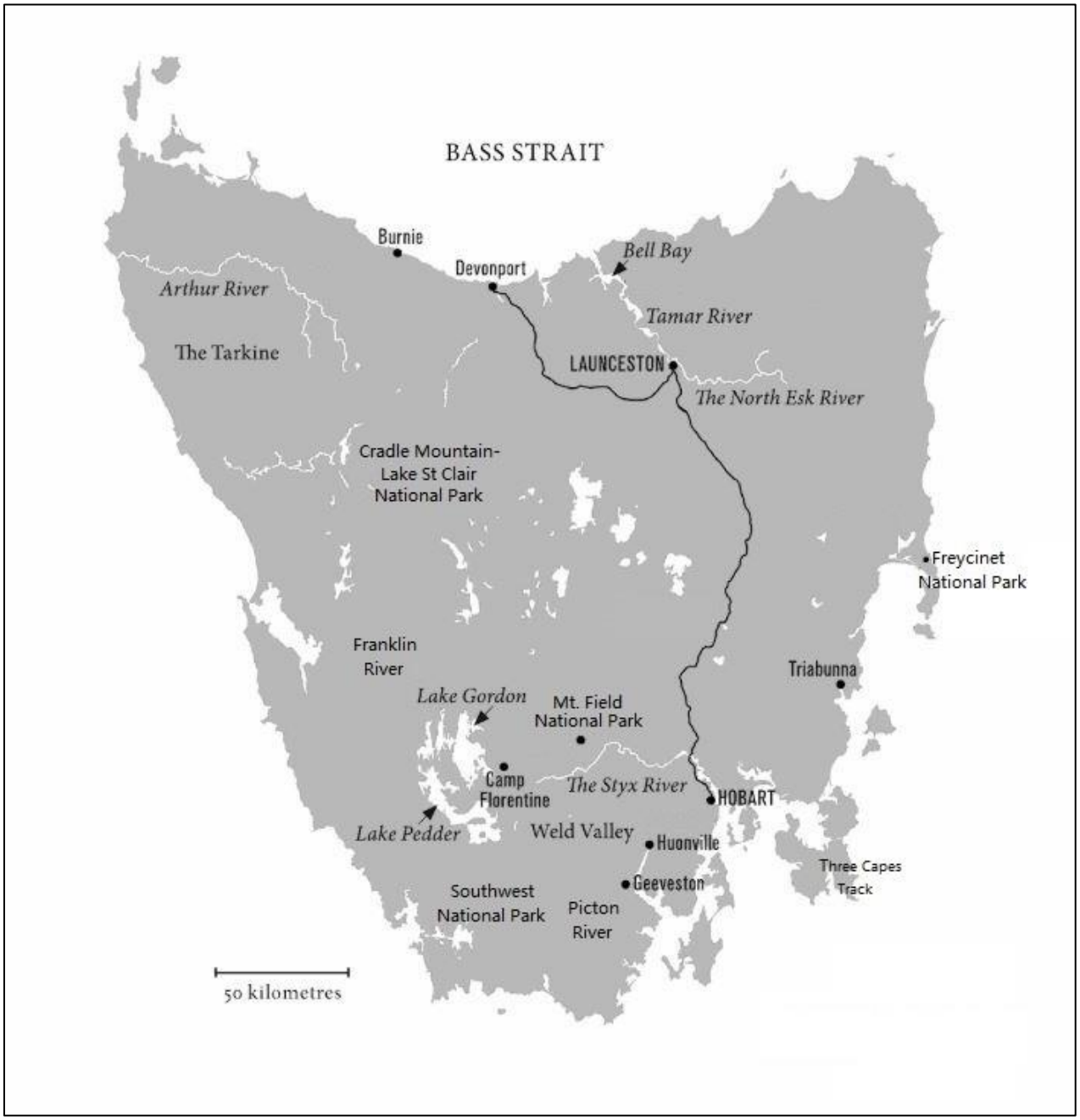
While the Tasmanian case study is the empirical grounding of this inquiry, there are wider theoretical resonances. Participants' responses illustrate Tasmanian forests as symbolic of the six key aspects of ontological security: material constancy; routine and ritual; escape and refuge; self-narrative; the nonhuman; and the future. Through these operationalised points, participants' understandings and experiences of Tasmanian forests reflect the construction and experience of ontological security. In critiquing and remodelling ontological security and applying this framework to an environmental sociological study, I demonstrate the utility of the concept for qualitative research in environmental sociology. Further, my research contributes an understanding of human-forest engagements as oriented toward underexamined themes of vulnerability, emotion, and ontology. The findings challenge established approaches within the subdiscipline of environmental sociology and undermine dominant discourses of the Tasmanian case study.

As stated above, almost all participants referred to experiences of bushwalking and – as I touch on throughout this thesis – the participants of this study tended to lean towards a conservationist ethic. This does not indicate that the findings of this research constitute a typology of a certain form of 'conservationist ontological security'; rather, ontological security is an individually negotiated experience. Nor do I suggest that those who occupy other positions within Tasmania's political and occupational spheres – such as an industry stakeholder, or a forestry worker – could not locate a sense of ontological security in forests. Perhaps in those instances, the process and experience of ontological security could 'look' quite different to that of the study's participants, being potentially less grounded in concepts of preservation and refuge, and/or more rooted in vocational concerns. Of significance here, however – and as I discuss in Chapter 3 – is that it is a crucial feature of this study that I do not re-entrench the narrative of 'sides'; the experiences of ontological security described in this thesis belong to individuals, not to groups. While the study's participants did tend to share some 'green' characteristics, exploring their perspectives need not obscure, erase, or be dependent upon the perspectives of those Tasmanians to whom I did not speak.

The following chapter discusses the theoretical, historical, and cultural location of this research. It establishes the context of the subsequent chapters, and sets the scene of the Tasmanian case study. It is within this context that I met and spoke with the 27 participants of this study, who so generously shared their memories, opinions, concerns, and hopes for Tasmanian forests, and for humans and nonhumans at large.

Part One

Tasmania



Original map reproduced from Krien (2012) *Into the Woods: The Battle for Tasmania's Forests*.

This map has been edited to highlight locations mentioned in the thesis.

(Note: The original map did not include King or Flinders Islands, which are located in the Bass Strait.)

Chapter 1: Setting the Scene

> How can so many people all be looking at the same thing and see it so differently?
>
> Krien (2012: 146)

> Standoffs, with their highlighted antitheses, indicate and emphasize the uncomfortable coexistence of different frameworks of space, time, and action. Or, what is the same thing, they highlight the difficulty of acknowledging such coexistences without a concomitant sense of threat or intimidation.
>
> Wagner-Pacifici (2000: 225)

This chapter establishes the disciplinary, cultural, and historical context of this research. I begin by providing a brief overview of environmental sociology, including my engagement with four relevant theoretical debates within the subdiscipline. I then provide a brief overview of the political history of Tasmania's forests. Drawing from this academic and social context, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the primary literature gaps and issues that the remainder of the thesis addresses.

Environmental sociology

Environmental sociology arose as a significant subdiscipline in the 1970s. There is a common – if potentially inaccurate (Foster 1999; Hannigan 2014) – assumption that the work of early social theorists such as Marx and Weber had little to say concerning the nonhuman environment; environmental sociology has emerged through this supposition, broadly aiming to understand human-nonhuman interactions and the social nature of the nonhuman.

Environmental sociologists seek to undermine disciplinary assumptions that relegate the environment as a "passive participant" in a world shaped by human enterprise (Lockie 2004: 26), instead approaching the nonhuman as a vital and unmistakably social part of human lives.

Pitched as a remedy to this disregard of 'the environment' by the social sciences, Catton and Dunlap's (1978) New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) is an orientating example of how social researchers may understand human-nonhuman interactions in sociological ways. The NEP is noteworthy as a 'ground-breaker' in environmental sociological theory and research; subsequently, many writers have adopted it. However, the NEP is overly typological and highly dichotomised, with validity issues common in its construction and application (Hedlund-de Witt 2012). These are the origins of environmental sociology that I acknowledge, before parting company with them.

There are several common foci across the environmental sociology literature. One is the impact of social institutions, technology, and consumption upon the environment, including early work that explained "the origins of the environmental 'crisis'", and more recent work focused on developing effective environmental 'interventions' (Hannigan 2010: 164). Seminal (and, notably, macro-level) theories include Inglehart's (1971) postmaterial values thesis, and Schnaiberg's (1980) 'treadmill of production'. Another area involves the study of environmental movements and collective identities (Stern et al. 1999; Böstrom 2004; Saunders 2008; Ackland & O'Neil 2011; Hannigan 2014). Others focus on the intersection of the environment and themes of risk, anxiety, and disaster response (Pellow & Brehm 2013), particularly following Beck's (1992) influential 'risk society' thesis. Increasingly, environmental researchers are

concentrating on aspects of climate change (Pellow & Brehm 2013; Cantrill 2015), including climate change scepticism (Tranter & Booth 2015; Tranter & Lester 2015), and the unequal distribution of climate change effects (Lawson 2016). Other theorists still work to 'green' existing theoretical paradigms to render them more appropriate for addressing ecological concerns (Hannigan 2006).

In empirical research regarding environmental worldviews, common themes include the role that values, attitudes, and interests play in individuals' relations to the nonhuman (Hedlund de-Witt 2012). Studies that focus on 'values' include those that operationalise measures of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism (that is, valuations of the nonhuman), as well as those "[o]ther studies [which have] showed specific sets of values to be positive predictors of environmental behaviors" (Hedlund de-Witt 2012: 76; Dietz et al. 2005). There is a broad literature investigating the link between values and environmental issues, attitudes, behaviours, and conflicts (Opotow & Weiss 2000; Schultz & Zelezny 2003; Schultz et al. 2005; Milfont & Gouveia 2006; Milfont et al. 2006; Bidwell 2013; Ordóñez & Duinker 2014; Tranter & Lester 2015; Tranter & Booth 2015; Choma et al. 2016; Hine et al. 2016). Often this literature is not strictly sociological, with many researchers adopting an interdisciplinary approach, or 'loaning' ideas and paradigms (such as the NEP) from environmental sociology. Other common approaches to understanding human-nonhuman interactions include the role that feelings of connectedness (or separateness) to the nonhuman play, and identifying differences in individuals' "perception[s] of the most appropriate and effective organization of society and solutions to environmental problems" (Hedlund de-Witt 2012: 77). As Hannigan (2014)

observes, many environmental sociologists tend to express goals of encouraging 'pro-environmental' beliefs and/or behaviour in the public.

Dunlap et al. (2002) suggest that there is little unification in environmental sociological approaches; similarly, Hannigan (2006: 12) identifies "at least nine distinct competing paradigms" within the subfield. The brief review above, however, illustrates that 'core' environmental sociological research places a heavy emphasis on quantitative, macro-level, and/or epistemologically realist approaches (see Brewster & Puddephatt 2017). This is not to say that environmental sociologists engaging in both theoretical and empirical work do not engage in micro-scale, qualitative, and constructionist work; many do, including those cited within this thesis (e.g. Jepson & Sharpley 2015; Lohm & Davis 2015). Nor is it necessary to reinforce macro-micro dualisms in environmental sociology (Brewster & Puddephatt 2017). My argument here is simply that there seems a pervasive assumption – both within and outside the discipline – that environmental topics are better served by structural explanations (class, technology, consumerism) and/or typological approaches than they are by themes such as emotion, relationship, ambiguity, and creativity. Interestingly, Williams (2016: 180) implicitly recognises this emphasis when he argues that few environmental sociologists have taken up phenomenology because of the perception that it is "an exercise restricted to subjective, small-scale analyses of everyday interaction", as if these interactions are outside the realm of the subdiscipline. The dominance of these quantitative/macro-scale approaches reflects the heavy influence of North American environmental sociologists – as well as the 'grand theory' contributions of notable European writers, including Beck and Giddens – alongside the enduring impact of Dunlap and Catton's work (Dunlap et al. 2002; Cantrill 2015). Buttel (2000:

19) describes the NEP as having "provided the template for modern environmental sociology", and, as Hannigan (2010) notes, Dunlap and Catton's approaches are heavily realist and non-symbolic (and contrast sharply with the work of interactionist theorists). Hedlund de-Witt (2012) observes that the approaches outlined above tend to rely on dichotomous views of human-nonhuman engagements, often conceptualising these interactions as anthropocentric *or* ecocentric, or as connected *or* separate. Such approaches are necessarily reductionist of the complexities of human-nonhuman interactions.

This review provides the theoretical starting point of this thesis. Given the subdiscipline's origins and trends, how might an environmental sociological perspective contribute to understanding the qualitative, micro-level questions that guide this inquiry? Part of the answer to this question lies in engaging with the emerging body of qualitative and micro-sociological work in environmental sociology. Another part lies in engaging with fields of research closely related to environmental sociology, including environmental communication, social psychology, human geography, and environmental philosophy and ethics; much of this work does not place the same emphasis on quantitative or macro-scale perspectives as environmental sociologists do. Engaging with theoretical debates within environmental sociology also opens further space to explore diverse approaches to human-nonhuman interactions. The remainder of this thesis engages with each of these 'methods' to provide an environmental sociological argument that privileges underexplored themes and approaches. The following section begins this work by outlining four key theoretical debates of the subdiscipline relevant to this research: definitions of 'the environment'; the extent to which this

environment is 'real' or 'constructed'; approaches to the human-nature binary; and questions of the nature of (nonhuman) agency.

Theoretical debates in environmental sociology

Defining 'the environment'

In a sense, defining 'the environment' seems a straightforward task, and indeed there is a colloquial understanding of the environment as the 'natural world'. Dictionary definitions of the environment tend to invoke the concept of 'surroundings'; combining 'surroundings' and 'naturalness' invokes ideas of '*the* environment'. This makes for a simple starting point: 'the environment' is the nonhuman that surrounds humans.

As I became immersed in the environmental sociology literature, however, a range of questions began to unsettle my definitional notions. What is 'nature' or 'natural'? Is there such a thing as 'untouched nature' or wilderness – are there spaces that humans have not affected? How do objects such as hybrid species or genetically modified organisms factor into the equation of naturalness? Are nonhuman animals part of the environment? Are humans animals? Are humans part of the environment? These are fascinating questions, which myriad writers have tackled (including many who appear throughout this chapter, and Chapter 2). Each question also deeply unsettles common-sense notions of the environment as synonymous with 'nature', and environmental writers have increasingly acknowledged this fact (Pellow & Brehm 2013). One popular means of addressing this is to recognise 'natures' or 'environments' in the plural, positioning 'the environment' as amorphous, diverse, and context-dependent (Macnaghten & Urry 1998; White et al. 2016). In critique of Malthus' environmental determinism, Bell (2011:

121) argues that "[t]he environment is not a given. We shape the significance it has … The environment is, in effect, a different place depending upon how we wish to use it and we envision what it is". Bell links this notion with the ideas of Bruno Latour (whose work I discuss further below). Further deconstructing the boundaries between the environment and the (embodied) human, Bell (2011: 127) goes on to propose the concept of the 'invironment': the "inner zone of the environment, where we find the body in perpetual dialogue with the environment". While I am not convinced that the 'invironment' will gain semantic traction, it does helpfully and critically return to the concept of 'surroundings' – not as something apart from the human, but as something in interaction with humans (see also West et al. 2006).

In this thesis, I have adopted the phrase 'nonhuman' (or 'nonhuman ecosystems/species') to denote that to which the labels of 'environment' or 'nature' might usually refer. These are the plants, animals, inanimate materials, processes, and interactions thereof that surround and engage with humans. The nonhuman surrounds humans, but its characteristics shift in interaction with human bodies, technologies, and ideas, and shape these spheres in turn. Some writers prefer terms such as 'other-than human' or 'more-than-human' (Panelli 2010; Nathen 2018), drawing from (post)human geography and anthropology (see Abram 1996). I have consciously adopted the term 'nonhuman', as I interpret it to be simpler and less value-laden than its alternatives, while still privileging the nonhuman as significant in its own right. The term 'nonhuman' is not an "oppositional account of it as alien or lesser" (Plumwood 2001: 29), but still effectively delineates humans and 'other' social actors – an appropriate move in a sociological study.

Here, I have not provided a distinct definition of 'the environment'. However, I endorse moves away from those approaches which would gather each element of the nonhuman, and attempt to identify them as a tangible and bounded monolith of 'nature' and 'the natural'. The nonhuman is not one static object but the coalescing of interactions and forms, and this understanding informs my engagement with the following three methodological debates.

Realism and constructionism

A major debate within environmental sociology – although one which has increasingly lost its polarised nature – is the extent to which the nonhuman is materially 'real' or social constructed. White et al. (2016) provide a succinct overview and assessment of these two positions. While 'hard' social constructionists and materialists may maintain their positions, there is now wide recognition of the passé nature of this debate (Macnaghten & Urry 1998). Following the general 'cultural turn' of sociology, environmental sociologists generally accept the notion that the nonhuman is, to some degree, a product of social construction (Macnaghten & Urry 1998; Dunlap 2002; Williams 2016). Likewise, it is an extreme theorist who denies the ontological realness of the environment.

Following the emphasis above on interaction and fluidity in defining the nonhuman, I reject a straight materialist approach. There is no nonhuman environment that is 'untouched' by human influence, and concepts of 'nature' and 'wilderness' work to misrepresent human agency (Ellen 1986; Ezzy 2004; McGaurr et al. 2014). I will return to these ideas later in this chapter. Throughout this thesis, I also argue that insightful environmental inquiry must take materiality seriously (although I take Cook and Tolia-Kelly's (2010) point that 'materiality' is a

slippery, multifaceted concept). The nonhuman has materiality with which humans form relationships; these relationships are, in turn, informed by our social locations and interactions. As Chapter 3 illustrates, I have adopted a social constructionist approach, acknowledging the nonhuman as both real and constructed. This method also speaks to the 'relational turn' of sociology, as the final section of this chapter explores.

Human-nature binaries

The third of these theoretical debates concerns the human-nature binary, a "dichotomy [that] has been central to Western thinking since time immemorial" (Moran 2006: 7). This dichotomy necessarily assumes a clear ontological distinction between human 'culture' and nonhuman 'nature'. Yet, as White et al. (2016: 36; original emphasis) put it:

> When we think about the relations between 'society' and 'nature,' it should be clear … that we are not simply bringing together for analysis two ahistorical boxes marked 'social system' and 'ecosystem.' Rather, the challenge is to grasp diverse *interrelationships* that have occurred between dynamic social histories and dynamic natural histories at multiple spatial scales across time and space.

Like all binaries, the human-nature binary carries within it a judgement of the relative value of each 'side'. In Western thinking, the 'human' or 'culture' side is privileged as important, powerful, rational, and/or in control, while 'nature' is positioned as controllable, irrational, and/or unimportant. It is not in the scope of this chapter to detail the sheer quantity of literature (such as environmental ethics and ecofeminist works, and the work of hybridity theorists) that explores this positioning of 'human' as primary and 'nature' as secondary. It is

sufficient here to note that this problematic assessment of the nonhuman world remains deeply embedded in Western thinking, and therefore shapes forms and structures of contemporary social life. Latour (1993), for example, argues that assessments of (Western) contemporary society as 'modern' rest on this distinction between humans and nonhumans. The fallacy of this binary distinction is the basis of Latour's famous assertion that 'we have never been modern'. Giddens (1991) similarly argues that 'sequestration' – the "'hiding away' of … experiences, relationships, practices, and ideas" of aspects of everyday life (Barry 2012: 26) – is a central characteristic of contemporary society. This includes the sequestration of nature ('nature' being Giddens' terminology). The tie between Latour and Giddens' arguments is the problematic contemporary assumption that humans can separate and control human and nonhuman spheres of life. Giddens (1991: 156) explains that:

> The term 'sequestration of experience' refers … to connected processes of concealment which set apart the routines of ordinary life from [certain phenomena including] nature … the ontological security which modernity has purchased, on the level of day-to-day routines, depends on institutional exclusion of social life from fundamental existential issues which raise certain moral dilemmas for human beings.

I will return to the concept of 'ontological security' in depth in Chapter 2. At its most basic, ontological security refers to a sense of trust in the predictability and stability of the world. Put simply, the 'pushing away' of the nonhuman – the relegating of it as secondary and other – therefore works to make people feel in greater control. I do not think this process is quite so simple, but there is some truth to the argument. Barry (2012), in his discussion and critique of Giddens, explains that processes of sequestration make it difficult for contemporary

(supposedly modern) humans to manage the sense of vulnerability exposed by engagement with the nonhuman. Yet, as Barry points out, this does not mean that humans should not confront vulnerability; rather, this confrontation is inevitable and necessary.

As Moran (2006: 7) argues, the "nature-culture dualism is inadequate in making sense out of non-Western realities, and even of Western ones". Undermining these boundaries forms the theoretical basis of environmental sociology, as well as a wide body of work from theorists such as Latour, Donna Haraway, Nigel Clark, Val Plumwood, and Ted Benton (see Plumwood [2001] and White et al. [2016] for helpful discussion and critique). Recognising the problematic character of human-nature binaries does not necessitate an erasure of human characteristics, however; the impetus for Benton's work, for example, is a rejection of human exemptionalism that nonetheless allows for the recognition of human actors' unique qualities (White et al. 2016: 31). Similarly, Head and Gibson (2012: 708) argue that researchers should "work out where and under what circumstances the human difference is relevant, and where and under what conditions the privileging of the human is problematic or fanciful". Such an approach is appropriate for sociological study of the nonhuman, which necessarily has the concerns of humans at its theoretical core.

Nonhuman agency

Questions of nonhuman agency closely follow debates about the human-nature binary. The consideration of nonhumans exercising various forms of agency is well-established, particularly in non-Western ontologies and ethics systems (as in animistic religious beliefs, for example). In (Western) social theory, writers working on topics such as 'relational materiality',

the other-than-human, and Actor Network Theory (ANT) have explored nonhuman agency. Notable theorists include Bruno Latour, Gilles Deleuze, and Jane Bennett, with interpretation of their work informing much of this area of literature (for example, see Bowden [2015] for various interpretations of Deleuze's work). These approaches are characterised by "the more explicit recognition that agency is 'democratically' distributed rather than concentrated in particular levels or categories of existence" (Clark 2011: 41).

There are various understandings of the meaning and expression of nonhuman agency. As Dürbeck et al. (2015: 121) argue, there is a need in social theory for:

> … an expanded sense of 'agency'; this means re-thinking the traditional subject-object delineation and the simple association of 'will' or 'rationality' as primary drivers in earthly actions. It also links to the much older as well as non-western discussions of an animated world as in vitalism or animism, in which things, animals, and human beings are all active forces. In philosophy and sociology, agency is often defined as the capacity of humans to make choices … in contrast to that of free will, [the concept of agency] acknowledges the fact that humans make decisions to act, but does not indicate whether this happens based on choice or other factors, whether internal or external.

Dürbeck et al.'s distinction between agency and free will is insightful, allowing for the recognition that while humans do make intentional, symbolically meaningful choices – and that this is a form of particularly human agency – material, relational, and cultural constraints shape these choices. Another interpretation of 'agency' – and one which I find particularly

illuminating – is as the human and/or nonhuman ability to affect other subjects and objects within a network. Drawing on Latour, Clark (2011: 42) explains that an 'actor', "whether human or nonhuman, animate or inanimate, real or imagined [is] defined not by any a priori category to which they may be ascribed, but by the difference they make to other actors and to the wider world". Moving from Latour towards the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Clark (2011: 48) goes on to "[consider] not only how nonhumans make worlds of their own, but how they provide worlds for others". The concepts of reciprocity and asymmetry are relevant here, demonstrating that different agencies can be 'lopsided', with the relationship between actors (or actors and actants, to use Latour's phrasing) not always equal. Clark (2011: 54) engages with assymetry to illustrate human dependency upon the nonhuman, arguing that "there is plentiful evidence to suggest that vital earth systems got by for a long time without any thinking beings to make sense of them".

While the recognition of nonhuman agency (and nonhumans' ability to affect humans) is necessary and important, there is a risk of overstating or mischaracterising the extent to which nonhumans are *social* actors. Critiquing Latour, White et al. (2016: 132-133) argue:

> The manner in which [Latour] encourages us to acknowledge that we live in a lively material world where humans live alongside multiple nonhuman presences is, of course, important … However, a good bit of actor-network theory is so intent on insisting that the presence of nonhuman actants is acknowledged within social theory, that it flattens the liveliness and creativity of vibrant humans, offering us a rather anthropomorphized account of the nonhuman forces that we share the planet with … It is a

> strategy that pushes back against sociological reductionism. However, this can then generate work that hovers between a necessary materialism and a rather Disney-fied vision of the 'agency' of nonhuman forces.

The conceptualisation of agency as the ability (of humans and nonhumans alike) to affect others is appropriate for this inquiry; although, as Head (2010) notes, it is important to recognise the power differentials between humans and nonhumans in the exercising of their respective agencies. In this thesis, I am concerned not only with what people think and do about forests (that is, the expression of human agency). Rather, I am also concerned with what forests are able to do to, with, and for people, and for other nonhumans. I am therefore operating with a similar approach to nonhuman agency as Cianchi (2015: 37), who explains that:

> … [more-than-human agency] describes the experience of perceiving the non-human other or landscape as acting upon the perceiver. It is the felt experience of the nonhuman other, an affective experience, which … may influence self-identity, conceptualisations of nature and social action.

The concept of 'inheritance' (Clark 2011: 55, drawing on Derrida) is also pertinent here. 'Inheritance' illustrates that action derives not only in the moment of contact between actors, but that humans come to a world that is already happening, shaped by (sometimes nonhuman) others who are already creating effects of their own. This echoes classic sociological perspectives of individual agency as shaped by structural and cultural factors. I suggest that sociological analysis misses important aspects of social life if that analysis erases the

nonhuman as a 'participant'; the nonhuman's existence has social effects, and in this sense, the nonhuman has 'agency'.

The unifying conclusion of these four theoretical debates is that the nonhuman "cannot be seen as a passive, blank sheet on which cultural formations are simply inscribed. Nature clearly 'pushes back' and injects its own materiality and dynamism into … 'socio-ecological processes'" (Jones & Cloke 2002: 30). This conviction heavily informs this research and like Jones and Cloke (2002: 30), I am concerned with "the complex coming together of tree materiality and the cultural constructions of trees" and forests. The four theoretical debates detailed here underscore the complexity of taking the nonhuman seriously as a participant in social life. This thesis does not offer a straightforward definition of 'the environment', as I do not believe it is necessary (or perhaps even possible) to do so. Chapter 3 contains further information about the definition of 'Tasmanian forests' used in this thesis. I have adopted a social constructionist approach which remains conscious of the impact of materiality; Chapter 3 also contains further discussion of this approach. The complexities of human-nature binaries and nonhuman agency are also significant aspects of this study, informing my goal of 'inviting the forest in' to the Tasmanian case study.

Tasmanian forests

The sections above have detailed the initial theoretical context of this inquiry. Here, I discuss this study's social and geographical location: Tasmanian forests. There are two primary reasons why the nonhuman, and particularly forests, have captivated my thinking to this extent. Firstly, it seems self-evident to me that the nonhuman is, in some way, a social actor. My own

interactions with the nonhuman shapes who I am and how I live in the world; in turn, I can see many ways that social structures and processes shape my interactions with the nonhuman. In these interactions I feel an almost inarticulable *something*, and I see others in my life who feel this too. The processes and emotions behind this experience fascinate me. Secondly, the environmental catastrophe that is contemporary life begets serious attention. Many writers argue that contemporary humans are living in an age defined by risk, anxiety, and fear; likewise, Barry (2012: 17) highlights the increasing sense of anxiety and pessimism that seems to unite disparate peoples. In this thesis I add my own voice to the chorus of the concerned – those who argue that to live well into the future, humans need to begin living differently. While Wagner-Pacifici's (2000: 3) work is far more Structuralist than my own, I appreciate her exploration of living 'in contingency', where "uncertainty, and ambiguity are foregrounded". Perhaps all humans are always living in contingency, to a certain degree. How humans learn to live in this climate and forge ways of living well are, I believe, fundamentally important (and fundamentally sociological) questions.

This thesis is concerned with forests. While forests and trees are not synonymous, there is an intimate connection between the two entities. Jones and Cloke (2002: 2) argue that the "fate of trees is often emblematic of the wider environment", with trees and forests embodying different and significant meanings across different times and cultures. On a physical level, trees and forests – in all their diverse forms – play a hugely significant role in global (human and nonhuman) health. Forests are significant sites of biodiversity, "genetic diversity for future foods and medicines", and carbon storage, with a range of environmental issues – from climate change and weather and water stability, to resource security, urbanisation, and globalisation –

implicated in forest wellbeing (Ambrose-Oji 2010: 311). Spaces do not have essence of purpose or usage, but are sites of meaning-making (Atkinson 2015: 135). As such, this thesis explores the ways that forests are important sites of identity, livelihood, ontology, and wellbeing for diverse peoples.

Why Tasmanian forests in particular? The following sections address this question. Personally, I find Tasmania's forests beautiful and fascinating; there is a certain quality to these places that I respond to on a deep, visceral level. In Tasmania, forests are salient, but under threat; the sociocultural setting in which I live has therefore shaped the strong feelings that I (and others) experience in response to these forests. It is important that sociologists make efforts to understand human-nonhuman interactions before the ecosystems in question are irretrievably damaged, if not altogether lost. Tasmania provides a valuable case study for this task.

A turbulent history

> 'Why Tasmania?' [industry representative] Barry Chipman once asked me. He's right – in the greater scheme of things, the island is nothing but a drop in the ocean. But its story is universal – and what goes on in Tasmania goes on in the mainland, goes on in the pacific islands, in other continents, until it comes straight back to Tasmania again.
>
> Krien (2012: 296)

Tasmania is Australia's southernmost and only island state, with a turbulent political history surrounding its forests. Head (2016: 14) argues that with its "distinctive colonial heritage that still infuses contemporary society", Australia provides an ideal vantage point from which to

consider the ways that humans live in an environmentally precarious world. A site of significant political movements and campaigns opposing extractive industries, Tasmania's history and conflicts form a key part of environmental politics in Australia. Various authors have explored Tasmania's forestry conflicts, with key texts including books and articles from Lohrey (2002), Ajani (2007), Lester (2007), Buckman (2008), Krien (2012), and Beresford (2015). These works provide more in-depth analysis of historical and political aspects of the Tasmanian case study than the scope of this thesis allows. Yet, as valuable as these authors' insights are, none provide a strictly sociological analysis, and each are highly focused on the construction and processes of environmental conflict. (Cianchi [2015] does provide a fascinating account of radical environmentalism and human-forest connections in Tasmania, although his analysis is less focused upon contributing to the Tasmanian case study as such.) Here I draw on these authors (and others) to instead provide an overview of Tasmania's environmental politics, establishing the context behind the sociological contribution of this research. The map on page 14 provides the locations of many of the places mentioned throughout this chapter.

Tasmania is a settler-colonialist state and as such, violence characterised its establishment as a Western settlement. Lawson (2014: 442) explains that while the "use of the term genocide in application to Tasmania … is contested", it is indisputable that the colonial forces subjected local Aboriginal populations to unspeakable violence. The effects of this violence remain felt today. I acknowledge that this thesis does not deal in depth with Aboriginal connections to land; it is not my story to tell, nor were these narratives told to me by participants. However, I do not seek to divorce contemporary Tasmanians' interactions with forests from the land's history as inhabited, shaped, and cared for long prior to colonisation. The treatment of

Aboriginal people and land, and Aboriginal connections to land, serve as powerful reminders that Tasmania has been (and remains) a site of violence.

Intimately tied to this is the negative environmental effects that colonisation has had upon the island. For a century and a half from British settlement, Tasmania's economy was reliant upon primary industries such as forestry and mining (Lester 2007). Early colonisers reacted to Tasmania's landscape with alienation, responding to it as "dauntingly 'other' in its external character" and soon attempting to modify the land to more closely resemble England (Haynes 2006: 18; Head 2010). As Krien (2012: 234) argues, the challenge is that it is "quite a leap to extend the concept of right to trees or the wilderness generally – perhaps especially so in a place like Tasmania, where the 'taming' or 'conquering' of nature plays such a crucial role in the colonial story". Krien goes on to poignantly question, "[d]id equal rights for all white Tasmanians mean equal opportunity to own and exploit the environment?" The modus operandi of colonisation – forcibly possessing new lands, while disregarding that which is present, unfamiliar, and 'inconvenient' – affects subjugated humans and nonhumans alike. In response, I make a small effort throughout this thesis to include place names drawn from palawa kani (a constructed language based on extinct Tasmanian Aboriginal languages), such as kunanyi (Mt. Wellington) and takayna (the Tarkine) (TAC 2017).

'Islandness' has been a defining characteristic of Tasmania, and often problematically so (Harwood 2011). Tasmania's population today is approximately 520,000, almost half of whom live in nipaluna/Hobart (Launceston is the second-largest city, at roughly 110,000 people). *The Tasmania Report 2017* (Eslake 2017) provides detailed analysis of various elements of

Tasmania's economic, employment, and education sectors. Forestry is a high value-adding sector for the state but, despite misconceptions, "the Tasmanian economy is more diversified, and less dependent on primary industry, than commonly believed", particularly in non-regional areas (Macintosh 2013: 12; Eslake 2017). According to the independent Forest Practices Authority (FPA) (2017: 29), in 2016:

> … there were 3658 full-time equivalent people employed in the forestry sector. This represented a total of 1.6 per cent of all people employed in Tasmania, a decline from ten years ago when approximately five per cent of the workforce was in the forestry sector. However, there has been a recent increase in forestry sector employment and it remains a major employer in regional communities.

This breakdown begins to geographically and culturally locate forestry in Tasmania. This, combined with the decrease in numbers of those employed by forestry, hints at the potential for political interest in the sector.

Forests cover approximately half of Tasmania's land area (around 3.35 million hectares), with native forest (non-plantation forest) comprising 91 per cent of this space as of 2016 (FPA 2017). Almost half of this native forest is dry eucalypt forest; wet eucalypt forest, non-eucalypt forest, and (rarely, at approximately 2 per cent) sub alpine eucalypt forest comprises the remainder. Plantations (managed coupes planted for timber harvesting) comprise the remaining 9 per cent of Tasmania's total forested area (FPA 2017). According to the FPA, as of 2016 "58 per cent of native forest was in reserves [1,778,000 hectares]", a significant increase from the 800,716 hectares under reserve in 1996. Of these reserves, 70 per cent are "formal reserves on

public land", with the remaining 30 per cent found in informal and private reserves (FPA 2017: 9). Since 1996, plantation area in Tasmania has increased by 106% (to 302,000 hectares in 2016), although there has been a small decrease in area since 2011 (FPA 2017: 8). Sustainable Timbers Tasmania (STT) (2018a) defines 'old-growth' forest as "mature forests where the effects of any previous disturbance are now negligible"; according to this nebulous definition, old-growth forest comprises 1.2 million hectares of land (85 per cent of which is "permanently protected in reserves") (see also Krien 2012: 119). Through publicly available online tools such as TASVEG and LISTmap, individuals are able to explore the demarcation of various space and flora types, such as the boundaries of national parks and plantations or particular plant communities. Yet, as the remainder of this chapter explores, the transparency and permanency of space demarcation in Tasmania remains contentious. There is a long history associated with this, as Buckman (2008) details in his description of the excision of part of Mt. Field National Park for timber harvesting in the 1940s. He labels this excision – along with that of several other national parks – as the earliest of Tasmania's conservation 'battles', with these land grabs "demonstrat[ing] that national parks were not necessarily safe" (Buckman 2008: 15; Haynes 2006).

A range of groups manage Tasmania's forests in various areas and capacities. These groups include the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment; the Commonwealth of Australia; Hydro Tasmania; private individuals and enterprises; and, most significantly for this research, Forestry Tasmania/STT (FPA 2017). Since the 1990s, Forestry Tasmania – rebranded as Sustainable Timbers Tasmania in 2017 – has been the government-owned administrator of forestry practices in the state. Forestry Tasmania's rebranding as STT

occurred after I concluded the fieldwork of this study; as such, all participants referred to the business as 'Forestry Tasmania'. Given this, I use the names 'Forestry Tasmania' and 'STT' throughout this thesis to refer to the business in both its past and current iterations. Forestry Tasmania/STT oversees various tasks, including road and quarry construction, regeneration and fuel reduction burns, and the management and harvesting of natural forests and plantations, ensuring the supply of "over 1.4 million tonnes of forest products each year" for industry (STT 2018b; STT 2018c: para 1). Through the establishment and maintenance of roads and walking tracks, STT plays a significant role in the access that members of the public have to large parts of the state's forests.

There are a variety of factors which make Tasmania a unique case study in regard to forestry (Lester 2007: 147). The key texts mentioned above identify many structural and political elements that have contributed to this. The state is also ecologically unique; "[u]p to 70% of Tasmania's alpine plants" are endemic (DPIPWE 2010), alongside many endemic species of mammals, birds, frogs, and invertebrates (DPIPWE 2011). Tasmania is also home to exceptional examples of *Eucalyptus regnans* (swamp gum), the world's tallest flowering plants, and old-growth forests and long-lived species are key aspects of appeals to Tasmania's forest values and conservation (DPIPWE 2010; Wilderness Society 2018). The state also has a specialty timbers industry, with highly-prized species such as Huon pine, sassafras, celery top pine, and King Billy pine harvested and/or salvaged for commercial use. This portion of the forestry industry has created controversy between the State Government, small-scale timber product producers, and conservation groups, particularly in terms of industry access to species found within reserves and the nature of the harvesting methods used (Bolger 2015a; Burgess 2017;

Shine 2017). One of these producers, Tasmanian Special Timbers (2018), explicitly contrasts their business ethos with that of large-scale forestry, claiming that:

> So much of the Tasmanian timber industry involves clear felling, mono cultures and short growth cycles. But at Tasmanian Special Timbers we turn these processes around: we deal only with logs stockpiled from salvage operations, collected after floods, or ancient stumps and roots taken from the forest floor after centuries lying in place.

This framing reflects the inescapable politicisation that surrounds Tasmania's forestry industry. The FPA (2017: 2) states that:

> Tasmania's forests are appreciated for their environmental, social and economic values. The challenge for forest managers is to balance these values through sustainable forest management. Forest management in Tasmania aims to protect the forest for current generations to enjoy, while continuing to satisfy today's demands for forest products and services.

This deceptively simple statement barely hints at the volatile political and cultural history behind Tasmania's 'forestry wars', described by Lester and Cottle (2015: 103) as "Australia's longest running environmental dispute".

It is not the aim (nor within the scope) of this chapter to provide a thorough overview of Tasmania's environmental political history. The key texts mentioned above provide in-depth discussion of various aspects of this story; Lester (2007), for example, offers a media and communications-focused analysis, while Beresford (2015) details the rise and fall of Gunns Ltd.

(once Tasmania's largest company and a major global woodchip exporter, whose industry monopoly ceased following the company's 2013 collapse) and the ill-fated Bells Bay pulp mill. Appendix One provides a timeline and account of the major events of Tasmania's environmental history, particularly following the 1972 flooding of Lake Pedder. This flooding was a "seminal moment" in Australian environmentalism (Lester 2007: 5); Head (2016: 38) similarly argues that "the rise of Green politics, first in Tasmania and then nationally, can be traced to mourning as a result of" the flooding of Lake Pedder. It is sufficient here to note that Tasmania's environmental history – which shapes perceptions and experiences of the state's forests and forestry today – has been one of turbulent, even violent, division. The sustainability, regulation, and transparency of forestry industry operations have been sources of major concern and controversy, generating what Flanagan (2007: 23) describes as "a culture of secrecy, shared interest and intimidation" (see also White 2008; Green et al. 2009). Both the Tasmanian Labor Party (an Australian centre-left political party) and the Tasmanian Liberal Party (centre-right) have displayed "enthusiastic complicity" in forestry operations (Green et al. 2009: 123).

One particularly salient issue in the past decade has been the Tasmanian Forest Agreement (TFA). The Tasmanian Parliament signed the TFA – colloquially known as the forest 'peace deal' – in 2013. An unprecedented show of compromise, the TFA was "brokered by a small group of industry, worker and environmental organisations", placing into reserve approximately 500,000 hectares of Tasmanian forests (Gale 2013). In return for agreeing to these reserves, the environmentalist stakeholders (including The Wilderness Society and Environment Tasmania Inc.) agreed to the state's industry bodies receiving the rights to 137,000 cubic metres of

sawlogs from Permanent Forest Production Reserves (Gale 2013). However, in an appeal to their (particularly rural) voter base, the State Liberal Government led by Will Hodgman soon campaigned on a basis of repealing the TFA (Morton 2018c). The strategy was successful; following their election, the Hodgman Government passed The Forestry (Rebuilding the Forest Industry) Act in 2014, effectively dismantling the TFA. This Act rescinded "around 400,000 hectares of reserves created in the agreement", with these areas converted into Future Potential Production Forest Land – a newly created category in Tasmanian forestry (Warman 2014). After 2020, the State Government can legally change this Future Potential Production Land to "permanent timber production zone land where native forest logging can happen" (Warman 2014). At the time of writing, the fate of these 400,000 hectares remains unknown and contentious.

In 2014, the State Government also passed laws targeting forestry and mining protesters. These were not the first of such laws in Tasmania, with similar acts having passed in the mid-1990s (Krien 2012). The Hodgman Government "promot[ed] its anti-workplace protests laws as the toughest in Australia … [meaning that] people who protest at mining or forestry sites could face time in jail" (ABC 2014b); Australia's High Court, however, has since found these anti-protest laws to be unconstitutional (Morton 2018b). The past few years have also continued to see Forestry Tasmania's economic management foment disagreement. Despite receiving Government subsidies, Forestry Tasmania reported a loss of $67 million – attributed to timber devaluation and "ongoing debt" – the year prior to its restructuring as STT (Burgess 2016). Industry figures have also questioned the viability of Government moves to extend logging areas (Wahlquist 2017) and, while the details of Forestry Tasmania/STT's financial

accounts lack transparency, Lawrence (2018) claims that "the last 20 years have been a financial disaster for forest management in Tasmania". Questions over the industry's economic management and financial worth remain problematic for many Tasmanians.

Beyond these issues, much of the contention regarding forestry in Tasmania concerns the practices of clearfelling (also known as clearcutting) and woodchipping. Clearfelling involves felling most of the trees in a given area, with a high-intensity burn following the timber harvesting; this is STT's "preferred method of harvesting in wet eucalypt forests" (STT 2018d). Ostensibly, this burning ensures eucalypt regeneration (STT 2018d), but this practice has also come under suspicion (Krien 2012). Flanagan (2007: 20), for example, claims that the "resultant fire is of such ferocity it produces mushroom clouds visible from considerable distances [demonstrating] that clearfelling means the total destruction" of the harvested area. (It is also worth noting the sad irony that a Forestry Tasmania burn-off was responsible for the 2003 death of El Grande, Australia's largest tree [Lester 2011]). From an industry perspective, clearfelling comes with benefits of efficiency and safety, but for conservationist groups, native forest clearfelling represents the ultimate destruction of valued areas. The Wilderness Society (2018), for example, claim that:

> When native forest is clear-felled, helicopters drop a napalm-like substance to burn off the remains. This releases carbon stored in soil and vegetation back into the atmosphere. For a region that trades on its natural beauty, the chemical-laden smoke tells a different story.

There are also questions about the 'pay-off' – economic and otherwise – of such indiscriminate logging practices. Lawrence (2018) argues that:

> In economic terms, what we are witnessing are the last days of a one-off 'mining' operation destroying natural capital … [Further,] If a forest is clear-felled, most people would accept that the landscape has indeed suffered a loss of intrinsic worth – a myriad of environmental, aesthetic, water catchment and carbon values. But no one is doing that big-picture accounting, and those other values are not reflected in the financial accounts.

Woodchipping – the chipping of felled timber deemed unsuitable as saw logs – often follows this clearfelling (which does not exclude the practice from being, at times, an end in itself). It has long been a similarly contentious practice for some Tasmanians, with Buckman (2008: 79) describing woodchipping as conservationists' "public enemy number one". While woodchips are a low-value forestry product, STT (2018e) argue that:

> On average for every sawlog and peeler log produced in Tasmania, there are two residue logs produced as byproducts. This proportion of high-quality logs is similar to that found in other native hardwood forests around the world … Getting the best possible economic return on residues is essential for the overall viability of the forest industry, and for generating a reasonable return for the State. Like any business, we need to maximise the value of all harvested products – we can't just sell the premium product while discarding the rest. This applies not just to public forests managed by Sustainable Timber Tasmania, but also to private forests.

This statement is an insightful example of the arguments that permeate Tasmania's forestry practices and politics. On the one hand, STT are here justifying their woodchipping (and similar)

practices through the language of efficiency, economics, and comparison to global practices. On the other hand, this language obscures the wastefulness perhaps inherent to STT's practices, with a low-value product from 'residue logs' produced at double (or possibly even higher [van Tiggelen 2014]) the rate of the high-quality products that are the 'positive face' of STT's business. At the time of writing, STT are seeking Forest Stewardship Council certification to "provide further and ongoing access to key markets and added stakeholder assurance that [STT] are managing the forests effectively" (STT 2018f). As Krien (2012: 214-227) suggests, however, corruption, auditing, and problems regarding regulatory certification have long plagued Tasmania's forestry industry.

Mining is also a contentious industry in Tasmania. While I do not focus on mining in this thesis, it does still present a threat to the conservation of some forest areas. A particularly salient example is the issue of mining in takayna, on Tasmania's North-West Coast. Prominent Tasmanian environmentalist Geoff Law (2013) explains that:

> The conservation movement is also seeking to have the Tarkine and West Coast rainforests added to the TWWHA [Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area]. However, the major stumbling block here is not the logging industry, but the support of the Tasmanian and federal governments for mining in these wilderness areas.

Regardless of one's stance on Tasmania's forestry industry, the one constant factor that unites invested parties seems to be the weariness borne of such back-and-forth conflict. Problematically, the events of the past decade – as detailed here and in Appendix One – suggest that Tasmania's environmental future may look considerably like its past.

In concluding this brief tour of Tasmania's environmental history, I acknowledge that this thesis features little explicit discussion of the state's tourism industry. This is partly due to the fact that tourism did not seem to be a particularly salient topic for the study's participants. However, tourism is becoming an increasingly hot-button topic in Tasmania, with 1.26 million visitors travelling to the state in 2017 (Tourism Tasmania 2018). Central to this tourism industry is Tasmania's 'clean and green' branding and 'wilderness' experiences (McGaurr et al. 2014); the state is known globally for its outstandingly clean air and water, and potential for ecotourism (CSIRO 2017; Bolger 2015b). This branding collides at times with the interests of the forestry industry; as McGaurr et al. (2014: 277) note, "national and international newspaper and magazine articles sometimes [draw] attention to the disconnection between 'natural' place branding and government support for extractive industries" (see also Harwood 2011). Current Liberal Premier (and Minister for Tourism and Minister for Parks) Will Hodgman has spruiked eco-tourism ventures in the state, claiming that the "acclaim for our nature based tourism shows that Tasmania has struck the right balance right between enjoying and preserving all that's special about our state" (Tasmanian Liberals 2018: para 5; Carlyon 2018). Yet Tasmanian tourism developments – particularly those affecting national parks or World Heritage Area (WHA) – can provoke dissent from environmentalist groups and concerned citizens; particularly relevant and current examples include the proposed kunanyi cable car in Hobart (MacDonald 2018), and the Lake Malbena development in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park (McManus 2018). In Chapter 7 I return to the kunanyi cable car issue. Tourism provides yet another space in which contentions and conceptual tensions surround the forests of Tasmania.

Rhetoric: Violence and Wilderness

The account above gives some indication as to the turbulent history that influences contemporary perspectives of Tasmanian political processes, industry, and Tasmanian forests themselves. This history is fundamentally a narrative of threat – to democracy, trust, and place. This section discusses two key forms of rhetoric which underlie historical and contemporary Tasmanian forestry politics: 'violence' and 'wilderness'. These two discourses have provided forms of persuasive and provocative language that have shaped the narratives and experiences of Tasmanian forestry and forests. While violence and wilderness are central to understandings of the Tasmanian case study, I suspect that they also have resonance in environmental conflicts throughout Australia, if not internationally.

Violence

> The **conflict** over forests may seem impossible to pin down but there is a certain stasis to the debate … For years [Tasmania's] environmental movement has been locked in a much larger **battle** with the state and its various intimates - the Hydro-electricity Commission, the wool industry, British Tobacco, North Forests Products, the Forestry Commission, Federal Hotels, Forestry Tasmania and Gunns. Often these conflicts are framed as a choice between conservation and jobs, as though nature and economic progress are **mortal enemies** … This familiar dichotomy makes resolution difficult, as struggling voters are told that 'greenies' want to take away their livelihoods.
>
> Krien (2012: 187-188; emphasis added)

As Krien (2012) makes clear, the language of 'violence' is a primary means of rhetorically framing Tasmanian forest politics. The obvious example is in the ubiquitous references to the state's forest 'wars' or 'battles', which permeate the speech of politicians, environmentalists, industry figures, and the public alike. Academic literature also echoes this framing, as seen in Ajani's (2007) *The Forest Wars*, or Buckman's (2008) *Tasmania's Wilderness Battles*. Metaphors of violence colour environmental activism literature, with Cianchi (2015: 22) arguing that "[d]efence of wilderness against developers, loggers and industry gives rise to war-like language and actions". Descriptions of violence also carry into everyday metaphors of forestry practices (Banham 2020, forthcoming). Similarly, Ezzy (2004: 29) describes Western rationalist views as seeing the nonhuman not as "something to be respected, as Other … but violently incorporated into the Same", while Flanagan (2007: 22) declares that the "hellish landscape that results from clearfelling [is] akin to a Great War battlefield". The outcome of this framing is a deeply-entrenched polarisation of Tasmanian forest politics.

Understandings of individuals' attitudes towards environmental policies often lean on assumptions that those individuals will either be 'pro-environment' or 'pro-economics' as if the two positions are mutually exclusive (Kaplowitz et al. 2011). As the quote from Krien (2012) above describes, it is this supposed choice between environmental and economic concerns that drives polarisation in Tasmania. This fuels a view of Tasmanian forestry politics as a matter of 'sides' – those who are 'pro-forestry' against those who are 'pro-environment', or what Hay (2008: 225) calls "a simple rural-urban configuration" of those 'for' or 'against' industry (see also Harwood 2011: 246; Krien 2012). As Harvey (1996: 174) argues, "discourses about nature internalize a whole range of contradictory impulses and conflictual ideas derived from all of

the other moments in the social process … [and] the discourses themselves conceal a concrete political agenda in the midst of highly abstract, universalizing, and frequently intensely moral argumentation". Discourses about how individuals relate to the nonhuman are similarly fraught.

The rhetoric of sides relies heavily on the proliferation of (largely unacknowledged) assumptions about group membership, values and interests, and the reproduction of problematic human-nature binaries. These are assumptions that I have observed in my own experiences, and through engagement with political, news media, and academic sources. These assumptions concern the practices, values, collectivities, and labels that inform the perceived binary of 'pro-environment' and 'pro-industry' 'sides' in Tasmania. For example, the 'environment side' is often associated with practices such as forest conservation, activism and protest, and bushwalking; linked with values and priorities such as 'untouched wilderness', being 'anti-progress', and left-wing, ecocentric, 'tree-hugger' views; seen to be aligned with groups such as the Tasmanian Greens, environmentalist groups (such as The Wilderness Society), Tasmanian Aboriginals, and middle-class urbanites; and labelled as irrational and emotional 'hippies' or 'loony lefties' (Banham 2020, forthcoming). On the other hand, the 'side' of 'pro-industry' Tasmanians is largely associated with practices such as forestry, mining, paid employment, and four-wheel driving; linked with values and priorities such as economic growth, development, intergenerational traditions, and right-wing, anthropocentric views; seen to be aligned with groups such as the Liberal and Labor parties, Forestry Tasmania/STT, rural interest groups, and Western/industrial society more generally; and variously labelled as 'rednecks', 'outdated', corrupt, or 'honest, hard workers' (Banham 2020, forthcoming). These

assumptions and associations continually entrench the polarisation of Tasmanians in relation to forestry, and perpetuate a perception of fundamentally incompatible goals and interests.

For these associations to perpetuate, accuracy clearly is not necessary – indeed, many are absurdly moralistic, and rely on fallacious assumptions of unified cultures within segments of the community (see Hay 2008). In 2016, Tasmanian Liberal senator Richard Colbeck authored a news article titled 'Fire hysteria the anti-industry green agenda'; in this piece, Colbeck links the Tasmanian Greens with hysteria, 'attacking' industry, "unscientific, ideologically driven rhetoric," 'wilderness' areas, and environmental protest, making his work a particularly illustrative example of this process of othering and labelling. Often these 'markers' are imposed upon individuals and groups; sometimes they become internalised and inform self-identity, such as in the case of individuals who profess environmentalist beliefs or concerns through the disclaimer "I'm not a Greenie, but…" (Haggerty 2007), or Tasmanian fishers who – while objecting to ecotourism development – have distanced themselves from "green activists" (Baker 2018b).

There are many examples of the tensions and misconceptions embedded in these labels. For example, it is common to hear opposition to extractive industries and development proposals branded and dismissed as being 'anti-progress'; writing about environmental protests in Western Australia, Gaynor (2017) argues that "[i]n each case the opponents were deemed to be 'anti-progress', with progress implicitly represented by the construction of new road infrastructure". This directly echoes the rhetoric of progress wielded in Tasmania, but – as this thesis argues – it is reductionist to conflate environmental concerns with opposition to

(uncritical conceptions of) 'progress'. Assumptions that loggers and Liberal voters are 'anti-environment' are also fallacious; as Clayton (2003: 45) succinctly puts it, political position and anti/environmentalism are not synonymous, and "many who are associated with positions that are considered antienvironmental nevertheless demonstrate, through words or behavior, their love of some aspect of the natural world". Even within 'groups' there are divisions, further undermining the concept of unified 'sides'. Krien (2012), for example, describes some environmentalists as perceiving 'feral' (transient or hard-line) protesters as hampering the conservation movement's efforts at public legitimacy, although they may nevertheless support these protesters in public in the interests of retaining an image of unity.

Eco-tourism in Tasmania is variously associated with both the environment and industry 'sides'. What one group brands an 'eco-tourism' venture might, to others, represent an unacceptable incursion on environmental values. The Lake Malbena case, mentioned above, is a relevant example of such a tension. The chief of the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania has dismissed environmental concerns about the proposal as "hysterical campaigning … [to] oppose any kind of new commercial tourism developments", with the Wilderness Society launching legal action against the development due to concerns for the diminishment of 'wilderness values' (McManus 2018). Similar eco-tourism ventures, however, may provide "opportunities … for embodied engagement with nature and possible counterexperiences of interpretation and advocacy" (Milstein 2008: 187). Eco-tourism therefore exemplifies the inconsistencies of dichotomised perceptions. Finally, it is worth noting the extent to which emotional response – and its supposed antithesis, rationality – are embedded in these labels. As Head and Harada (2017: 36) argue, emotions are "performative in that they work to define the boundaries of

subjects and orient people towards particular collectivities". As I explore throughout this thesis, emotional response and appeals to 'progress' and 'rationality' are significant aspects of Tasmanian identity, politics, and industry.

These views of Tasmania as a battleground – a meeting of two incompatible, diametrically-opposed sides – encourages an aggressive 'othering' of those (supposedly) unlike or opposed to the self. There have been numerous occasions of violence and vitriol marring Tasmania's forestry politics; high-profile examples include the multiple assaults of Tasmanian Greens leader Bob Brown, and a (filmed) attack by forestry workers upon a car containing two protesters (see Lester 2007; 2011; Krien 2012). While environmental groups internationally have committed acts of ecosabotage, tree-spiking, and 'monkey-wrenching', there is no substantiated evidence – despite accusations from industry groups and a Labor Party Premier – that Tasmanian environmentalists have engaged in these practices (Krien 2012; Cianchi 2015).

The dichotomisation of Tasmania's forestry conflicts has helped to create these persistent and turbulent conditions, rendering the recognition and celebration of ambivalence an act of resistance. As Krien (2012: 214) observes:

> … the more time I spend on the island, the more people I meet who have refused to follow the conflict's rules. These people aren't ratbags or ferals, or even passionately 'green', but they've spotted something odd and said something.

The perpetuation of so-called 'sides' in Tasmanian forestry politics is problematic. While there are broad distinctions between the value positions of certain groups, dichotomisation does

not account for those who fall 'in between' (as the above quote from Krien does). I suggest that the insistence that there are clear 'sides' that are unambiguously 'for' or 'against' forestry is more about processes of othering, distrust, and political interests than it is about the lived identities and experiences of everyday Tasmanians. I am not suggesting that there is no truth to these framings; for some people, labels of being 'pro-' or 'anti-forestry' likely do express something important about their ecocultural identity. For many Tasmanians, however, these labels are not enough, or accurate enough. Recognising ambivalence better represents objections and support for forestry in Tasmania, ensuring the cacophony of assumptions and othering does not obscure the intricacies of Tasmanians' concerns and opinions. Recognising ambivalence also allows for a reframing of forestry conflicts as opposition to practices and organisation, rather than as opposition to people (or to the generalised 'other'). This allows for conversations about the potential restructuring of forestry practices and management, which do not dissolve into claims of unequivocal opposition or support. I return to this discussion in Chapter 3.

Wilderness

The second key form of rhetoric underlying Tasmania's forestry politics is 'wilderness', a symbol that is "central to Tasmanian life" (Lester 2007: 38). Routinely, descriptions of the state's forests invoke the idea that these spaces are 'pristine', 'untouched', 'wild', and 'ancient', suggesting that such ecosystems are valuable for their perceived distance from human influence (McGaurr et al. 2014). Further, these descriptions imply that conserving these forests is contingent upon keeping them 'safe' from human influence. Conceptually, wilderness is "emotionally charged,

contested, and controversial" (Nelson & Callicott 2008: 1). Put simply, 'wilderness' is evocative but problematic.

'Wilderness' has an entrenched history in environmentalist discourse. McGaurr et al. (2014: 270) state that for decades, environmentalists have "used the concept of 'wilderness' to valorize wild places, as the label 'wilderness' signifies an unspoilt, untouched-by-humans quality". Yet across the academic literature, authors have repeatedly criticised and critiqued 'wilderness' as a concept (Cronon 1996; Callicott & Nelson 1998; Nelson & Callicott 2008). Writing in an Australian context, Head (2016: 115) describes the "pristine ideal [of] untouched nature" as:

> … a powerful but flawed current of Australian environmental thought; flawed in the sense that it is historically inaccurate (humans have been influencing the Australian landscape for tens of thousands of years), and of limited use in a future where human influences now dominate earth surface processes.

The key term of Head's description is 'ideal', situating wilderness (and associated concepts) as a value statement, rather than a fixed quality. Much criticism of wilderness ideals concerns the erasure of human impact facilitated by the use of the concept, particularly that of indigenous populations (Bayet 1998; Gómez-Pompa & Kaus 1998). While Western thinking tends to assume a view of indigenous populations as embodying 'green primitivism' (Ellen 1986), humans have continually inhabited, managed, and shaped so-called wildernesses across the globe. Rose (1996: 18) explains that:

> … many Australians have avoided accepting, or even attempting to understand, that at the time of their arrival this continent already had been

> discovered. It was already travelled, known, and named; its places were inscribed in song, dance and design; its histories were told from generation to generation; its physical appearance was the product of specific land management practices; its fertility was the product of human labour which had been invested in the land.

It is evident that Tasmanian Aboriginals' burning practices significantly affected the island's landscape, including vegetation growth patterns (Haynes 2006; Bowman 2016; Romano & Fletcher 2018). Descriptions of Tasmanian forests as 'untouched' or 'pure nature' at best erase this influence; at worst, they equate Aboriginal impact with 'natural' influences. Yet, perversely, those who wish to defend contemporary – and radically different – burning practices may acknowledge Aboriginal impact; as Krien (2012: 115) puts it, "[i]n Tasmania, Indigenous culture is seldom invoked unless to defend the forest industry's clear-fell and burn regimes", which Bowman (2016) describes as "a poor facsimile of Aboriginal fire". Similarly, FPA's (2017) 'State of the Forests' report invokes the concept of 'pre-1750' (that is, pre-Western 'discovery') levels of forest cover as a conservation baseline. I do not necessarily disagree with this goal, but it does reinforce a prevalent lack of reflexivity regarding Aboriginal impact upon Australian landscapes. As the following paragraphs will illustrate, nonindigenous impact upon 'wild spaces' is also, at times, highlighted, erased, celebrated, or opposed, dependent on political context and motivation.

Wilderness rhetoric – replete with these same problems of erasure – has permeated Tasmania's environmental history. The use of 'wilderness', and responses to its use, have changed with shifting political landscapes (McGaurr et al. 2014). Lester (2005: 125) writes that:

> … into the 1960s, as organised efforts to protect the southwest of Tasmania began, the word "wilderness" maintained a specific, descriptive and uncontested meaning. It defined a particular type of place – a place without roads or human interference (indigenous histories were ignored), not an inherent promise of something more.

The campaign to halt the proposal to dam the Franklin River (see Appendix One) relied heavily on the use of wilderness photography to galvanise support. This was reliance on a particular form of 'wilderness'; contrasting these images with the peopled, mid-century images of Olegas Truchanas, Head (2016: 40) argues that "[none of] the images used in the wilderness campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s … contained signs of any human presence. It is that later erasure of human presence that has been comprehensively critiqued" (see also Haynes 2006). By the Franklin campaign (circa 1978-1983), 'wilderness' had taken on connotations of being a desirable commodity, entering mainstream thinking as a symbol of an enjoyable (rather than frightening) experience (McGaurr et al. 2014). These associations have persisted, implicating wilderness in the 'place branding' of Tasmania as a "mediagenic [label] and a source of strong emotional ties between places, residents, and visitors" (McGaurr et al. 2014: 273). Once reviled, the stark differences between Tasmania and 'civilised' (European) places have come to be "a celebration of difference as a unique identity" (Haynes 2006: 22).

This commodification and 'mainstreaming' of wilderness – where the concept loses its 'mysterious' qualities, and becomes a product – highlights the issue of access to forest spaces. Is wilderness a quality of 'nonhumaness', dependent upon (some degree of) separation from human presence? Or is wilderness a commodified experience, which necessarily relies on

human 'visitors'? Perhaps the answer is both. McGaurr et al. (2014: 275) cite a 1994 dispute regarding the proposed installation of a four-wheel drive track through the Tarkine, arguing that Greens leader Bob Brown's use of the term 'resource' in a speech against the proposal suggested that he:

> … recognized the strategic advantage of attributing economic as well as symbolic value to protected wilderness. But whereas Brown claimed wilderness would be "transmogrified" by a road through the Tarkine (1994, p. 12), the state's tourism minister argued that even wilderness already protected as world heritage required greater tourism access to ensure its continued preservation.

This raises questions of what 'counts' as wilderness in Tasmania, particularly in light of increased public access to supposedly 'wild' spaces. Placing such a cultural value on 'wilderness' prioritises a certain type of forest, insofar as easily visible signs of industrial human impact potentially render a forest 'unworthy' of conservation efforts. As McGaurr et al. (2014: 277-278) state:

> In 1994, one [Tasmanian] government had argued—in opposition to the environmental movement—that wilderness required tourism access to demonstrate itself worthy of protection. By 2013, expert advice favoring protection despite traces of human intervention was rejected by another government implying that such evidence demonstrated an irredeemable lack of 'wilderness' values.

Recent years have seen the emergence of a related discourse: the 'locked up' (or 'opened up') forest. The most vocal uses of this discourse have been to denote areas that have been supposedly 'locked away' from public use and (economic) benefit – as seen in the Tasmanian Liberal Government's unsuccessful 'Forestry (Unlocking Production Forests) Bill 2017' (Tasmanian Government 2017). Similar to 'wilderness', this discourse is a matter of perspective as to the extent to which remote areas are, can be, should be, and will remain to be separate from humans, and to what end. Whereas the Liberal Government's bill clearly positions a 'locked up' forest as a problem (as it indicates a lack of economic potential), a conservationist may perceive the same space as a forest that has been 'locked away' from future harm. Likewise, competing perspectives may interpret a forest as 'opened for business', or 'opened for public access'. An illustrative example of this discourse at play lies in the name of the pro-forestry group 'Give it Back', who staged a 2012 protest at the base of Miranda Gibson's record-breaking tree-sit (Hutchins & Lester 2012). Who can access Tasmanian forests, and for what purposes, has long been a product of power dynamics.

McGaurr et al. (2014: 281) argue that commodification and 'wilderness' place branding have led to the local 'routinization' of wilderness; that "[b]randing and media support for the local tourism industry had successfully stripped 'wilderness' of its political charge". Yet, in international media, Tasmanian 'wilderness' has seemed to retain its (still commodified) appeal as an object requiring protection from (certain) human impacts (McGaurr et al. 2014). In turn, this has inspired locally-produced tourism campaigns that have capitalised on wilderness branding (McGaurr et al. 2014). My point here is that there is no single use of 'wilderness' rhetoric in Tasmania, and the tensions that emerge from competing uses tend to hint at deeper

issues – particularly to do with access and intervention – regarding human-nonhuman interactions. The ways that human impact upon 'wilderness' is conceptualised and problematised in Tasmania, including the recognition of only certain humans and human activities, is a significant factor in how Tasmanians relate to the state's forests. This suggests that there seems to be a problematic binary present between 'invisible' intervention in Tasmanian forests (such Aboriginal, non-industrialised, or eco-tourist interventions, and/or those that take place close to urban spaces) and 'visible' intervention (Western, industrialised, politicised interventions, and/or those that take place in remote spaces).

It is significant that the two forms of rhetoric discussed here appeal to concepts of boundaries and binaries. Both 'violence' and 'wilderness' rest on assumptions of clear distinctions not only between humans and forests (that is, humans and nonhumans), but also between different types of humans based on how those humans relate to forests. I do not mean to argue that there are no 'boundary lines' between these categories, identities, and actors, but that these lines are blurrier and more contentious than such rhetoric suggests. While I do personally find many elements of Tasmanian forestry politics and practices problematic – environmentally, ethically, socially, and economically – the purpose of this chapter has been to highlight the spaces in which misunderstandings and division have occurred. This research is not about forestry, per se, but Tasmanian forests themselves; it is therefore crucial to critically examine the cultural context in which Tasmanians meet and interact with these forests.

Literature gaps and issues

The sections above have located this inquiry (sub)disciplinarily, historically, and culturally. A driving question of this study is why people care about Tasmanian forests, and what that experience is like. This does not necessarily refer to 'caring' in terms of empathy or environmentalism; rather, I am interested in the experiences of those Tasmanians personally invested in forests and forest issues, who relate to these places in emotional, existential, and identity-driven ways. As I discussed in the opening sections of this chapter, much environmental sociology literature is quantitative, realist, and concerned with macro-level analysis, overly emphasising the cognitive and attitudinal dimensions of human-nonhuman interactions. However, attempts to quantitatively measure and label these interactions are misrepresentative of a complex and often ambivalent process, and do not serve the Tasmanian case study usefully. There is a growing recognition of the need for qualitative and micro-level approaches to environmental sociological theory and research (Brewster & Puddephatt 2017), and I align this thesis with that call. Considering the discussion raised thus far, the remainder of this chapter briefly details four key literature gaps and potentials that this research addresses. These are: conflict-centric approaches to the Tasmanian case study; relational sociology; considerations of vulnerability; and the concept of 'ontological security' as an environmental sociological framework.

Conflict-centric approaches

This chapter has demonstrated that both academic and lay understandings of human-forest interactions in Tasmania have focused primarily upon human-human conflict, and the fallacious notion of 'sides'. In a sense, this removes Tasmanian forests from the conversations

that ostensibly concern them. It is quite easy, when reading about Tasmanian forest politics, to forget the emotional and embodied experiences that Tasmanians have with/in forests – experiences which often act as the impetus for activism, political intervention, and social division in the first place.

I do not mean to suggest that Tasmania's forest conflicts have not been significant, or worthy of the academic and political attention they have received. Nor do I wish to downplay the extremely significant role that these conflicts play in situating Tasmanians' experiences with/in forests. Rather, my concern is that persistent framing of Tasmanian forests as an object of conflict have, at best, perpetuated social division; at worst, I fear that this focus on conflict and othering has embedded alienation (between people, and between people and forests) into Tasmanian culture and forestry practices. If there are to be new conversations regarding forests in Tasmania – and the legacy of vitriol certainly suggests that such conversations are necessary – then there is a call for the exploration of new approaches. This thesis contributes to that call.

Relational sociology

Conflict-centric approaches to the Tasmanian case study tend to rely heavily on certain aspects of the situation: human-human relationships, structural influences (particularly economic factors, political affiliations, and the role of media), and the history and dynamics of the conflicts themselves. Vulnerability, emotion, and networks of agency and interrelationship, however, have received little attention. There is ample recognition of the socially constructed aspects of emotion (Williams 2001; Bericat 2016), yet conflict stakeholders seem to view

emotional responses to the nonhuman as peripheral and individualised, rather than as embedded in the very structure of power dynamics and conflicts. Sayer (2011: 2) argues:

> [There] are things people care deeply about … If we ignore them or reduce them to an effect of norms, discourse or socialization, or to 'affect', we produce an anodyne account of living that renders our evident concern about what we do and what happens to us incomprehensible … Concepts such as 'preferences', 'self-interest' or 'values' fail to do justice to such matters, particularly with regard to their social character and connection to events and social relations, and their emotional force.

Reflecting the 'relational turn' of the social sciences, relational sociology provides an avenue through which to shift this focus. Dépelteau (2018a: v) describes relational sociology as "a precious, valuable space for fundamental and rigorous deliberations in a time where human beings (still) need to re-evaluate the ways they relate to each other and to non-human interacts". Relational sociology is an approach focusing on relationships and processes, and "a worldview insisting on our interdependency rather than our independence" (Dépelteau 2018b: 11).

An early proponent of an explicit 'relational sociology', Emirbayer (1997) distinguishes between 'substantialist' and 'relational' ways of considering the social world. Emirbayer (1997: 281) explores the "fundamental dilemma [of] whether to conceive of the social world as consisting primarily in substances or processes, in static 'things' or in dynamic, unfolding relations". Substantialist modes of thinking have dominated social sciences, emphasising "the notion that it is *substances* of various kinds (things, beings, essences) that constitute the fundamental units

of all inquiry" (Emirbayer 1997: 282; original emphasis). In contrast to the substantialist approach, Emirbayer (1997: 281) advocates for a relational sociology that analyses "social reality … in dynamic, continuous, and processual terms". Dépelteau (2018b: 8) emphasises that relational sociology is not simply a vague or self-evident statement that 'relations matter' in social sciences. Rather, in light of the "inconvenient truth that we are fragile, temporary and interdependent beings … relational thinking is a call to question Western dualisms [and] a challenge to a Western culture" that overlooks the fundamental interrelationship of subjects and objects (Dépelteau 2018b: 10-11).

Relational sociology resonates with environmental topics. Dépelteau (2018b: 11-20) advocates for the emerging "importance of non-human interactants in relational sociology", arguing that:

> … the relational mode of perception of reality is based on a sense of ontological vulnerability. There is … a related invitation to orient ourselves in less egocentric ways if we do not want to destroy each other and make our environment more dangerous.

I believe that – to varying extents – substantialist approaches underlie many Tasmanians' understandings of forestry issues and conflicts in the state. This positions environmental conflict as conflict over a thing or object – be it a forest, an industry, a person, or organisation – rather than as a process emanating from networks of relationships and agencies. The significance of relational thinking here is that social reality has patterns but is undetermined; social life exists in a state of contingency, where humans and nonhumans interact in fluid, changeable ways. Drawing on Latour, Papilloud (2018: 184-185) explains:

> … we can observe the interactions between actors and things from the viewpoint either of the actors, or of the things: 'You are different with the gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it' (Latour 1999, 179) … the association between actors and objects modifies the meaning of the subject as well as his categories and the meaning of the objects.

It is clear, then, that relational sociology is compatible with the form of social constructionism informing this study (which I discuss in further detail in Chapter 3). Taking liberties with Latour's words, this research argues that Tasmanians become different by their interactions with forests, just as forests are different for their interactions with humans. Papilloud (2018: 194) proposes that nonhuman actants occupy an important but overlooked role in social life, arguing that "sociology has to consider not the ensemble but the glue between humans and non-humans". While I do not claim relational sociology as a formal framework of this study, the relational mode of thinking has inspired me to consider human-forest interactions as processual and contingent.

Vulnerability

Relational sociology is concerned with themes of vulnerability. As Dépelteau (2018b: 10) describes:

> Even worse for those who are looking for reassuring (modern) stories: this [acceptance of change and lack of human control] is not simply about liberating ourselves from old and recurrent traditions by using our Reason to create a perfect, stable and equilibrated society. Instead, we are left with the vision of a universe where 'interdependency' replaces 'freedom'; a

> universe made by unpredictable chains of interactions including the inevitable unintended consequences of action, the presence of threatening interactants (from killers to viruses and asteroids) and, again, anxiety.

Vulnerability is a central theme of this thesis. Humans are inherently vulnerable, as I explore in Chapter 2; forests, too, are vulnerable entities, open to harm from forestry practices, invasive species, natural disasters, and climate change (and the question of the extent to which human action lies behind each of these threats is an interesting and thorny tangent). I am interested in themes of vulnerability, anxiety, and precariousness, as humans have "come to a point where the seeming constant, the environment, is no longer necessarily so" (Ambrose-Oji 2010: 320). Anxiety and precarity are themes commonly explored within the environmental social sciences, but many of those writing in this area focus on concepts of risk and disaster (particularly in terms of technologically-induced risks, and threats to human health). As I discuss in the following chapter, my work incorporates these themes in a more abstract, existential manner than many of these authors. As Ruti (2006: 223) states:

> Soulfulness is a matter of learning to live with the volatility and unknowability of existence without falling into states of psychic rigidity … while our impulse might be to demand clarity from the world as well as from ourselves, soulfulness implies knowing how to experience states of non-mastery as enabling rather than threatening.

This thesis explores similar ideas, through a micro-sociological approach. How might Tasmanians live with vulnerability in productive ways, and how does this vulnerability inform

human-forest engagements? Ontological security offers a framework to consider such questions.

Ontological security

These three themes – a move away from conflict-centric approaches towards a focus on relationality and vulnerability – chart the shift in my thinking that took place during the early stages of this inquiry. Parallel to this shift was my rising interest in 'ontological security', which I first encountered in Norgaard's (2006) work. Ontological security – an individual's "sense of continuity and order in events" (Giddens 1991: 243) – simply made sense to me as a potentially useful and relevant concept to explore these themes. Yet there is a significant lack of ontological security literature within environmental sociology, and other environmentally-focused social sciences.

This shortage of current literature prompted me to consider whether ontological security could be a useful framework for generating new perspectives of human-forest interactions, and of the Tasmanian case study. Ontological security provides insightful language to articulate the basic argument that forests are not 'just trees', and the complexities of human-forest interactions. The following chapter details this literature gap and conceptual framework.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the disciplinary, cultural, historical, and political context and approach of this inquiry. Environmental sociology is largely quantitative, realist, and macro-level in focus, and this inquiry moves away from these patterns to focus on overlooked themes

such as emotion and vulnerability. The identification of four key theoretical debates in environmental sociology, alongside the key literature gaps and issues that this research addresses, clarifies the theoretical and philosophical approach that I adopt throughout this thesis. Finally, in briefly illustrating the complexities and conflicts of the Tasmanian case study, this chapter has identified the particularly precarious material reality and turbulent political context in which Tasmanians respond to the state's forests. The following chapter takes up where the final section of this chapter left off, establishing the conceptual framework of this study: ontological security, as adapted for qualitative environmental sociology.

Chapter 2: Ontological Security

Chapter 1 established the research's disciplinary location and social context. This context illustrates the relevance of two of the questions driving this research: why do (some) Tasmanians care about the state's forests, and what is that experience like? This chapter outlines the conceptual framework through which this study answers these questions. This framework is based on the concept of 'ontological security' – drawn primarily from Anthony Giddens' *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) and *Self-Modernity and Identity* (1991) – as adapted for environmental sociological inquiry.

The chapter opens with an explanation, critique, and operationalisation of 'ontological security'. Drawing on Giddens' conceptualisation – alongside the work of other writers who have adopted Giddens' work – I provide my own definition of ontological security as it informs this study. Extending Dupuis' and Thorns' (1998) operationalisation, I then outline a new operationalised model of ontological security. Building from this model, the latter sections of this chapter sequentially illustrate the six key themes linking ontological security with understandings and experiences of forests: material constancy; routine and ritual; escape and refuge; self-narrative; human ontology as understood through the nonhuman; and human vulnerability and understandings of the future. Through a discussion of significant ideas relating to these themes, I establish my approach to the key research questions of this thesis. To recap, these questions are:

> In what ways are human-forest engagements implicated in the establishment and experience of a sense of ontological security?

In what ways are Tasmanian forests symbolic of (that which contributes to a sense of) ontological security?

Ontological security

Giddens (1991: 243) defines ontological security as a "sense of continuity and order in events". It is the trust individuals have that the world, their lives, and their self-identity are fundamentally stable and predictable. The 'taken for granted' nature of social interactions fosters a sense of ontological security, with routine and communication norms 'shielding' the individual from the chaos of unpredictability. As such, Giddens posits ontological security as a 'non-conscious' process (what he terms 'practical consciousness'). Ontological security is based in the development of trust (ideally cultivated in infancy), which 'brackets out' anxiety and despair (Giddens 1991: 38-47). It works to answer existential questions of ontology, humanity, the self, and others, allowing the individual to function socially, satisfied that their social and material worlds will retain stability. In Giddens' conceptualisation, the 'doing' of ontological security takes place through experiences and performances of emotion, routine, and self-identity ('self-narrative').

These basic tenets tend to underpin the way that social scientists engage with ontological security in their writing. They also heavily inform the conceptualisation of ontological security in this thesis. One key (yet not often explicitly stated) aspect of ontological security is its temporality. A sense of stable self-narrative looking from the past into the future, an 'at-ease' experience of the present, and a trust in a foreseeable future all inform the construction and experience of ontological security. Atkinson (2015: 20) argues that "[t]emporal and spatial

systems interact in framing social events [and] are themselves socially constructed"; the temporality of ontological security – in interaction with forest spaces – is a theme that I return to throughout this thesis.

Giddens' focus remains largely at the macro-level, exploring the ways in which the conditions of 'high modernity' shape ontological security. This makes sense; as Grenville (2007: 449) says, "to understand ontological security one has to understand the particular socio-political circumstances under which it was formed". Further, ontological security is contingent on structural factors, including access to the conditions that the individual associates with a sense of ontological security. For example, Vaquera et al. (2017) highlight the particular forms of precariousness faced by undocumented migrants in the United States, demonstrating the structural aspects that informed their participants' experiences of ontological security in comparison to the experiences of legally-recognised citizens. Giddens – along with a wealth of writers, most notably Beck (1992) – is concerned with changing conditions of risk and trust. He contends that contemporary social conditions reduce "the overall riskiness of certain areas and modes of life, yet at the same time [introduce] new risk parameters largely or completely unknown to previous eras" (1991: 4). As such, a "key feature of Giddens' depiction of ontological security … is the distinction made between the nature of ontological security in the premodern and the modern worlds, in particular that its relation to day to day routines differs systematically between the two worlds" (Dupuis & Thorns 1998: 27). Giddens explains that in contemporary society, 'abstract systems' (such as money, or others' expertise) are the distanced mechanisms through which trust is experienced, accounting for an 'undermining' of ontological security in the contemporary world. Giddens' (1990; 1991) theorising – while at

times meandering – generally returns to this premise that ontological security is a reflection of macro-scale, historically-situated social change. As Lash and Urry (1994: 38) describe, "Giddens is the consummate general social theorist".

While Giddens asserts that ontological security is "an emotional, rather than cognitive, phenomenon" (1990: 92), his conceptualisation is in many ways aligned more closely with psychology than with social theory. This is unsurprising, given the concept's origins: psychiatrist R. D. Laing's intent in first theorising 'ontological security' was to develop "a way of contrasting the mental state of the 'man in the street,' who wrestles with normal levels of existential doubt, with that of people with schizophrenia" (Harries 2016: 3). Grenville (2015: 46) explains:

> The difficulty … is how we translate a notion that has its roots in ideas of personal development of the individual to behaviors at a wider social scale, whether neighborhood or national. Can we really apply a psycho-social theory of personal development to whole societies or sub-sections thereof?

While the "overly psychological position" (Dupuis and Thorns 1998: 30) of Giddens' work does present something of a methodological issue, adopting a critical approach to ontological security renders it appropriate for use in sociological analyses. Central to this approach is a move away from macro-level analyses, to more carefully consider how ontological security operates at the level of the individual. As Giddens argues, long-term social structural changes shape shared tendencies towards certain modes of ontological security; individual expression of beliefs, routines, and assumptions, however, illuminate many 'paths' towards ontological security. Ontological security must be engaged with in such a way as to consider the diversity

of lived experience. I propose three areas of critique through which to explore new and effective applications of ontological security to qualitative sociological inquiries: a continuum approach; recognising the ambivalence of change; and the role of relationship. Critical analyses of ontological security appear to be uncommon although some writers, such as Zhukova (2016), have adapted the concept for different purposes.

Appendix Two provides an incomplete but representative overview of the literature explicitly engaging with ontological security. There is a high concentration of literature in home and housing studies; Dupuis (2012: 157) explains that "a number of scholars … [have argued] that the home could provide the secure base through which people could achieve a sense of ontological security". Beyond housing, the major areas of literature featuring ontological security are studies of migration and diaspora, and health sociology. Other social science disciplines such as anthropology and international relations have also adopted the concept. The ontological security literature commonly explores themes of home, precariousness, identity, and future planning; most use qualitative methods, with some examples of mixed methods studies (Hiscock et al. 2001; Malcolm et al. 2017). As I will discuss below, ontological security is conceptually vague and difficult to operationalise; this is evident in the tendency of many writers to engage with ontological security in theoretically shallow ways, or use it as a 'catch all' concept. The following critique of ontological security also identifies some further issues that the literature reflects, particularly the treatment of ontological security as a stable 'achievement'.

Critiquing and defining ontological security

A continuum approach

The influence of Laing's work on Giddens' thinking helps to explain the psychological leanings of Giddens' conceptualisation of ontological security. Lash and Urry (1994: 38; original emphasis) argue that "Giddens' [agent] is increasingly *self*-reflexive … in the organization of his or her personal biographical narrative"; the individual who lacks ontological security is depicted by Giddens as struggling to understand the self and sense of time, and as obsessional, psychologically paralysed, and anxious (1990: 93; 1991: 53-54). This implicitly frames ontological security as a state of being: an individual possesses ontological security, or lacks it. This approach is too simplistic to account for the fluctuating and conditional encounters with stability, precarity, and hope that an individual will experience in their life. Giddens goes some way in acknowledging precariousness, as Croft (2012: 223) observes:

> No matter how ontologically secure the agent may be, there is always a fragility as well as a robustness to that position; there is always an awareness of the polar opposite of ontological insecurity, the paralysis of action through dread. The ontologically secure individual can never be always secure in that position; there is always a precariousness.

Yet even in this acknowledgement, there is the implication of a 'polar opposite' state of being (see also Possamai-Inesedy 2002) – the assertion that even if the individual can never permanently remain ontologically secure, it is nevertheless a state of being that one 'achieves'. I disagree with this conceptualisation – ontological security is fundamentally to do with experiences of ease, anxiety, and vulnerability, and the fluidity of these experiences must be emphasised. As such, I support Bondi's (2014: 334):

> … understanding of ontological security and ontological insecurity as a continuum along which we all necessarily move, sometimes with great speed, rather than as a binary distinction that locates and fixes each of us within one of two discrete categories.

This posits ontological security not as a status that an individual holds or achieves, but as an experiential process. Much of the literature that engages with ontological security, however, implicitly defines it as a fixed status (for example, using terms such as 'achievement' or 'attainment'). Further, some writers depict ontological security as a status causally linked to particular conditions. The debates throughout home and housing literature focusing on ontological security and tenure type reflect this causal linking, with Saunders' assertion that home ownership confers ontological security being a particularly influential argument (Dupuis 2012: 157). Other researchers have undermined these assumptions, arguing that even transient tenure types – such as rental housing (Kearns et al. 2000; Mee 2007) or living in caravan parks (Newton 2008) – can grant a sense of ontological security. Others still have questioned whether the home is necessarily a site of security; citing situations such as domestic violence, Dupuis (2012:160) argues that "[j]ust as home can be a haven, it can also be experienced as a place of brutality". While some of these writers still ascribe to a causal process, the ambivalence they express supports the argument that ontological security is not a state of being, achieved simply by having or doing certain things; rather, it is a continuum of experience. Further, an individual may experience a sense of ontological security through some aspects of their lives, while simultaneously experiencing a diminished sense of security in others (the experiences of a secure and comfortable homeowner who is also in the process of divorce, for example, could

exemplify this). Given the complexity of human lives, relationships, and emotions, it makes little sense to consider ontological security as a totalised state of being.

Other (non-housing studies) writers also affirm and/or undermine this problematic binary approach to ontological security. For example, Fozdar and Hartley's (2014: 150) use of the term "re-establishment" (of migrants' sense of ontological security) is insightful, illustrating that ontological security is not 'possessed' but rather, is restructured and renegotiated through the navigation of life experiences. Similarly, Vaquera et al.'s (2017) study posits migration as a 'disruption' to ontological security, implying a sense of fluidity. Yet Vaquera et al. (2017) go on to affirm a binary approach, asserting that a "[feeling] of nonexistence that the state bestows upon [migrants] … *kills* ontological security" [emphasis added]. Some authors. such as Armstrong-Hough (2015) and Zhukova (2016), also refer to 'ontological *in*security' in ways that imply a similarly binary approach. Conceptualisations of ontological security commonly oscillate between this dichotomisation and the 'continuum' approach described by Bondi (2014) above. Explicit rejection of a binary approach ensures that ontological security is more clearly reflective of individual and multifaceted lived experience.

Change as ambivalent

Giddens' (and others') conceptualisation of ontological security appears inherently conservative. Contrasting his work with Beck's, Lash and Urry (1994: 38) suggest that Giddens' "notion [of reflexivity] mainly functions to reproduce structures"; indeed, Giddens' definitions imply that continuity and constancy are desirable, 'good' states, particularly in contrast to the undesirable erraticism of change and inconsistency. I do not go so far as to argue that

individuals experience anxiety and instability as positive states. However, the move here is to differentiate between positive and negative changes, and the assumption that negative changes are something that an individual can or should avoid. Rapid change, anxiety, and lowered trust in institutions are markers of contemporary social life (for example, see theories of 'anti-politics' [Clarke et al. 2018]), and a useful definition of ontological security must take this into account.

Change is not only inevitable, but often welcome and productive – or at least ambivalent. Climate change, for example, is such an ambivalent change. Existentially unsettling and frightening as it is – depending on one's perspective – climate change also creates potential for the development of new technologies, justice movements, and empathetic relationships (for example, see Clark [2011] for a discussion of community in the aftermath of disaster; see also Head [2016]). Further, the existence and experiences of climate change denialists demonstrates that 'change' is not necessarily the unit of interest for social scientists, so much as the *interpretation* of change is. Anthropogenic climate change is occurring, but individuals' experiences of this change (as shaped by their political or ideological beliefs) fundamentally affects the extent to which this change impacts upon their ontological security (see also Williams 2016: 186-187). Change may also imply comfort or familiarity, in the sense that an individual's observation of change may reflect their long-term relationship with the object of change (I may see changes in my own home, for example, that a visitor would not observe). In this way, trust in continuity – a fundamental aspect of ontological security – is not necessarily incompatible with the recognition that change is inevitable. An uncritical approach to ontological security can fail to differentiate between welcome and unwelcome changes, or the

mixed effects of changes. A critical approach should seek to understand the complicated effects of change, and differentiate between 'types' of change.

The literature described above may illustrate the utility of this expanded definition of change. For example, resettled migrants may experience their shift in living situation as a positive change, rather than as an undermining of ontological security; similarly, escape from a situation of domestic violence may be a positive element of change amidst an unsettling experience. Nettleton and Burrows (1998; see also Colic-Peisker & Johnson 2010) suggest that the pressures accompanying home ownership (such as affording a mortgage or the fear of foreclosure) may undermine ontological security; in such a situation, a positive change could be found in 'downsizing' to a rental tenure (commonly assumed to be a less ontologically secure tenure type). A recognition of change as potentially productive can therefore help reconcile the idea of ontological security with precarious living situations, because it is not necessary to avoid change to be ontologically secure. As Harvey (1996: 54) puts it, "perhaps the most important of all dialectical principles [is that] change and instability are the norm and that the appearance of stability of 'things' and systems is what has to be explained". This expanded understanding and acceptance of change increases ontological security's suitability for elucidating the realities of individual's lives.

Relational aspects of ontological security

Thirdly, a key and largely overlooked aspect of ontological security is the role of relationship and interaction. Giddens (1991) does describe the caretaker/infant relationship as the basis for ontological security, and briefly discusses ontological security in *The Transformation of*

Intimacy (1992). Yet ontological security is an emotional process (Giddens 1990: 92) and as the remainder of this chapter will explore, emotional experiences (such as anxiety, vulnerability, and attachment) accompany relationships and inform experiences of ontological (in)security. If ontological security is fundamentally about trust in continuity, the prospect or experience of loss (of the subject/object informing ontological security) could call this trust into question. Love and attachment are also about connection to something that the individual hopes to retain a connection with. Here I am not restricting the concept of 'relationship' to human-to-human relationships. Rather, I am interested in individuals' relationships with that which is symbolic of ontological security (including nonhuman species, ecosystems, and objects). I suggest, for example, that the wealth of literature linking ontological security and the home would benefit from more explicitly framing the 'home' as a symbol with which one potentially experiences a relationship of love and attachment (or even grief, in the case of loss of home). I expand upon the role of symbols in this process in Chapter 3.

A further implication of this relational approach is the ability to undermine individualistic understandings of ontological security, and conceptualise the process as not simply a matter of self-preservation or self-interest. For example, climate change may threaten an individual's ontological security through its ability to threaten a cherished place with which one experiences a relationship, or through its ability to threaten the wellbeing of future generations and nonhuman species. As Nicholsen (2002: 19) succinctly puts it, the "anxiety we feel is not merely for the destruction of human lives but also for those other creatures and places, and for a world in which we would be at home". These are experiences of disruption to the trust an individual has in continuity and stability; they are therefore experiences of disruption to

ontological security, but not because it is necessarily the individual's wellbeing at stake. Put simply, we love, hope, and worry for those who are not ourselves.

Defining ontological security

Ontological security is not an emotional state as such, but involves emotion; it also involves routine actions, and the establishment of self-narrative. It is not a fixed condition, but is a dynamic process shaped by both life circumstances, and the objects or subjects with which an individual engages. Ontological security is fundamentally temporal. With these points and the above critiques in mind, I offer the following definition of ontological security, as I use it in this thesis.

'Ontological security' is a subjunctive state of being. It is an experience that emerges at the point of contact with that which symbolises a reflexive acceptance of the past and an assurance of the future. This acceptance and assurance can contribute to emotional experiences of ease, hope, comfort, and confidence. 'Ontological insecurity' is not its opposite, nor the absence of security. Rather, ontological insecurity is the experience of the diminishment (whether through relational, cultural, and/or material processes) of these qualities of acceptance and assurance. This diminishment can contribute to emotional experiences of grief, anxiety, and fear. This definition draws its phrasing from Wagner-Pacifici's (2000: 3) concept of the 'subjunctive mood', in which uncertainty and contingency are emphasised, and the unknown/unknowable underlies action.

In this thesis, the symbol in question is 'Tasmanian forests'. As such, I argue that ontological security is a subjunctive state of being that emerges from (some) Tasmanians' engagements with Tasmanian forests, which operate as a symbol of meanings which affirm a sense of reflexive acceptance and assurance. The political, cultural, and historical conditions discussed in Chapter 1 shape both the materiality of Tasmanian forests, and the social meanings available to those humans who interact with Tasmanian forests. The remainder of this chapter explores this process of symbolic meaning-making, illustrating the complex connections between Tasmanian forests and ontological security.

Ontological security and the nonhuman

Giddens explores elements of the nonhuman throughout his prolific thinking. For example, he suggests that contemporary environmental politics are "fuelled by an increasing demand for the remoralization of abstract systems of social organization" (Goldblatt 1996: 71), coalescing with the "paradox [that] nature has been embraced only at the point of its disappearance" (Giddens 1994: 206). (Goldblatt (1996) also notes Giddens' emphasis on the role that increased ecological knowledge and perception of risk play in the rise of environmental politics, reflecting a common tendency amongst environmental theorists to overlook the role of human-nonhuman *relationships* in environmental political and ethical movements.) Giddens' work does explore the link between ontological security and the nonhuman environment, particularly in his argument that ontological security is a "function of [modernity's] ability to sequester … anything which challenge or undermine [sic] our sense of … [the] normality of quintessentially modern forms of 'being in the world'" (Barry 2012: 39). Put simply, the ontological security of contemporary humans depends (according to Giddens) on their ability

to 'filter out' that which challenges it, including the nonhuman (interestingly, however, Giddens does not engage with ontological security in his 2009 publication, *The Politics of Climate Change*). Further, Giddens' analysis "stress[es] the importance of natural, rather than created environments for the maintenance of ontological security" in pre-modern societies (Dupuis & Thorns 1998: 28). This is a point of contention with some researchers – notably Saunders, who takes aim at Giddens' emphasis on 'natural' environments with his argument "that the day to day activity in both [pre-modern and modern] worlds is routinised and takes place through familiar time-space paths" (Dupuis & Thorns 1998: 28). While Saunders may be criticised for his uncritical approach to the benefits of home ownership, I agree with his point that individuals also construct and experience ontological security through engagement with built environments. For Giddens, the sequestration of the nonhuman leads to the 'disembedding' of ontological security from 'natural' rhythms (with ontological security then re-embedded in abstract systems). While I generally agree with this claim, I take issue with the implication that nonhuman ecosystems are not valuable places of investigation in attempts to elucidate ontological security.

There are relatively few examples of environmental social science studies that utilise ontological security. Following the influence of theorists such as Beck (1992), those writing in this area have focused largely on environmental disasters and risk, engaging with discourse (both popular and academic) that frames the environment as a site of danger and anxiety. There are writers exploring similar ideas through alternative terms and definitions; Booth and Tranter (2017), for example, link household under-insurance and notions of 'trust'. In the theory-testing of ontological security, however, I am interested primarily in those works that

engage specifically with Giddens' concept. Extensive searching for the term 'ontological security' in environmental sociological literature raises surprisingly few examples. Harries' (2008) study, analysing the lack of preparations undertaken by those living in flood-prone areas, appears to be more widely cited than most in this area. The study ties together ideas of risk and home, with Harries (2008: 479) arguing that:

> Preferring to think of their homes as places that are innately safe, [the participants rejected] the idea of defending them; preferring to think of nature as a positive moral force, they hesitate to view it as a source of real danger; and preferring to think of society as a competent protector of last resort, they are reluctant to accept the need to protect themselves. Being central to ontological security, such social representations (of 'home,' 'nature,' 'society' etc.) are defended by avoiding perceptual shifts and behaviours that might challenge them.

While she does not utilise the concept of ontological security, Power's (2009) work exploring the role of possums in the embedding and breaching of 'home boundaries' in Australia extends this dialogue. Arguing that "[b]order ruptures … do not simply threaten home, but paradoxically can also produce a simultaneous sense of [being in place]", Power (2009: 29-30) highlights the complex interactions between individuals, environmental conditions, and the affective dimensions and meanings of place and 'home'. Other authors do engage with ontological security. Citing Harries (2008), Demeritt and Nobert (2014: 313) investigate the communication of flood risks, analysing the "underlying normative and conceptual models on which those competing assessments of 'good' risk communication depend". They suggest that findings in social psychology, which emphasise the role of emotion in flood risk response, sit

comfortably with sociological approaches such as ontological security. Using a similar conceptual approach to understand bushfire risk (and also citing Harries (2008)), Lohm and Davis (2015: 407) argue that "[b]ushfire preparedness is also largely premised upon a belief that people are rational beings and will respond to risk in a rational manner … [however] risk may not be merely a rational financial calculation but also entail … ontological security". Blake et al. (2017) study the experiences of those who lack the means to adequately prepare for environmental catastrophes, while Adeola (2004) states that environmental catastrophes have affected ontological security on a societal scale. Writers have also used ontological security to examine Hurricane Katrina (Airriess et al. 2008; Hawkins & Maurer 2011), environmental decision-making (Veland & Lynch 2017), and proximity to potential landfill sites (Wakefield & Elliot 2000). Of this environmental literature, the common theme is a focus on risk, threats, and disaster – that is, exceptional events. Yet, as Berlant (2011) (and Beck's 'risk society', to an extent) points out, crisis and contingency are systemic, structural, and universal.

Battistelli and Galantino (2018: 6) propose an expanded theoretical model of risk and threat which draws on concepts of agency and intentionality, describing 'danger' as non-intentional action (such as a 'purely natural' disaster), 'risk' as intentional but "positively oriented" action, and 'threat' as "intentional and negatively oriented" action. (Similarly, McDonald (2008: 63) argues that "global environmental change does not fit" within conventional conceptions of security and threat). As Battistelli and Galantino (2018) acknowledge, the interpretation of an action as 'risk' or 'threat' is a matter of perspective; the clearfelling of a forest coupe may be an economic risk to an industry investor, but an emotional threat to a conservationist (and an embodied threat to the lives of those nonhuman creatures living within the space). Further,

the significance of that same coupe is not solely a matter of what humans do *to* it. Rather, that same space may also have significance for being a place of recreation, as animal habitat, or as a site of intergenerational logging practices, and therefore may have positive connotations for diverse people. My point here is that human engagements with the nonhuman may incorporate any or all these concepts, and that ontological security can and should push these conversations beyond the language of risk, disaster, and negativity. As I will discuss later in this chapter, I am also interested in the ways that humans potentially live well and productively in engagement with vulnerability and contingency. It is perhaps for this reason that I consider Norgaard's (2006) work to be particularly valuable in the area of ontological security and the nonhuman. Observing Norwegians living in a village affected by climate change, Norgaard argues that individuals engage in emotional and communication norms – that is, routines of denial and avoidance – to retain a sense of ontological security (a similar conclusion to that seen in Harries [2008] above).

While still at times preoccupied with the concept of risk, literature concerned with environmentalist action and conservation provides another link between ontological security and the nonhuman. Cottle (2008: 862) states that:

> Feelings of 'ontological insecurity' … concerns about 'risk society' (Beck, 1999) … a sense of a more diffuse 'culture of fear' (Furedi, 2002) and … 'politics of fear' (Altheide, 2006; Bauman, 2007), all speak to the increased sense of threat that now seemingly informs the preparedness of growing numbers of people to take to the streets to protest and demonstrate.

Brand (1999) draws perhaps the most explicit and eloquent link between ontological security and contemporary environmentalism. Here, Brand (1999: 636) frames environmentalism as a logical reaction to a generalised, postmodern (to use his framework) sense of ontological insecurity:

> Giddens states that 'basic trust in the continuity of the world must be anchored in the simple conviction that it will continue, and this is something of which we cannot be entirely sure'. This is a basic tenet of environmentalism which is intimately connected to contemporary social experience in general … In short, the extension of abstract systems into more and more aspects of everyday life can be seen as creating a sense of vulnerability, of which environmentalism is an integral part. The environment both symbolizes and materializes that sense of vulnerability, and environmentalism as a generalized attitude towards space can only be fully understood in the context of a cultural condition of ontological insecurity.

Ontological security also potentially enhances understandings of individuals' desires to conserve particular areas or ecosystems, but there is a scarcity of literature in this area. In discussing conservation (albeit of heritage buildings, rather than 'natural' landscapes), Grenville (2007) begins this work by arguing that feelings of ontological insecurity may prompt urges for conservation. Vodanovic et al. (2017: 24) discuss "the generation of emotions associated with a territory", linking ontological security to the individuals' connection with particular ecosystems (the only such explicit example that I have read). Jokinen and Holma (2001), who focus on routinised behaviours in forest management, provide an exceptionally rare example of literature specifically engaging with both ontological security and forests. This

scarcity of literature – studded with examples which hint at the efficacy of ontological security for understanding the nonhuman in social scientific ways – indicates a literature gap. Harvey (1996: 157) speaks most closely to a 'future direction' for ontological security which explores human experiences of the nonhuman beyond 'risk', to include the positive, the ambivalent, the emotional, and the ethical:

> The advantage of seeing values as residing in nature is that it provides an immediate sense of ontological security and permanence. The natural world provides a rich, variegated, and permanent candidate for induction into the hall of universal and permanent values to inform human action and to give meaning to otherwise ephemeral and fragmented lives.

This thesis addresses this literature gap, explicitly illustrating one model by which an expanded understanding of ontological security improves sociological insights into human-nonhuman engagements.

Operationalisation

To recap, in this thesis 'ontological security' is a subjunctive state of being, experienced at the point of contact with that which symbolises reflexive acceptance of the past and assurance of the future. In much of the literature described above, however, writers engage with the concept in somewhat vague, 'catch-all' ways; overly conflate ontological security with experiences of risk; and/or continue the overly psychological approach that characterises Giddens' writing. Having defined and critiqued ontological security, the following section focuses on operationalising it to render the concept empirically observable.

Giddens' descriptions of ontological security are simultaneously descriptively detailed, yet conceptually vague. As such, writers have acknowledged the difficulties in operationalising ontological security; some "have described the theory as 'difficult to define and even more difficult to operationalize' (Saunders 1989) and, more pithily, as 'a fantasy of the academic' (Franklin 1986)" (Grenville 2015: 46). Having basically no currency within the public lexicon, 'ontological security' is not only difficult to describe, but also difficult for individuals to identify in their own lives, including in the research context. The non-conscious nature of ontological security compounds this issue. Hiscock et al. (2001: 61) allude to this challenge, stating that "[a]lthough it was not possible to ask interviewees directly about ontological security, there were further aspects of the discussions that could be related to this subject". Similarly, Saunders (1989: 186) suggests that operationalising 'ontological security' requires "sophisticated indicators regarding people's levels of worry, concern and paranoia as well as measures of self-conception and positive social identity". As with all social science inquiries, researchers must consider carefully how associated terms, experiences, and processes may be utilised to allow access to the concept under inquiry. In Chapter 3 I outline some details of my own approach in this vein.

Most helpful in my efforts to operationalise ontological security has been Dupuis and Thorns' (1998) model (reiterated by Dupuis [2012]). Their model operationalises ontological security in regard to home and housing; as such, Dupuis and Thorns clarify the link between ontological security and built environments (particularly given Giddens' reluctance to draw such an association). It is a succinct model, summarised in Table 1, which builds clearly upon Giddens' conceptualisation of ontological security.

Table 1. Conditions of 'home' reflective of its role in constructing a sense of ontological security:

1. Home is the site of constancy in the social and material environment.
2. Home is a spatial context in which the day to day routines of human existence are performed.
3. Home is a site where people feel most in control of their lives because they feel free from the surveillance that is part of the contemporary world.
4. Home is a secure base around which identities are constructed.

Dupuis and Thorns (1998: 29)

Drawing from Dupuis and Thorns' (1998) work, I have developed my own model of ontological security, as summarised in Table 2. Tasmanian forests play a role in constructing, reflecting, and sustaining an individual's ontological security insofar as the individual relates to these conditions. Below I explain the key changes I have made to Dupuis and Thorns' model.

Table 2. Conditions of Tasmanian forests reflective of their role in contributing to a sense of ontological security:

1. Tasmanian forests as symbolic of material constancy
2. Tasmanian forests as symbolic of routine and ritual
3. Tasmanian forests as symbolic of escape and refuge from the surveillance and threats of the contemporary world or built environment
4. Tasmanian forests symbolic of a consistent self-narrative
5. Tasmanian forests as symbolic of the nonhuman, through which ontological understandings are constructed
6. Tasmanian forests as symbolic of the future and human vulnerability

This model refers to forests as 'symbolic of' various aspects of ontological security, rather than forests being a 'site of' these aspects (as Dupuis and Thorns do regarding home). A focus on symbolic meaning more closely aligns with the definition of ontological security that I have developed for this thesis, and better reflects my emphasis on the *process* of ontological security (rather than a focus on the 'end result' of ontological security, as many writers adopt). This approach has some similarities with Harries' (2008) model, which understands the pursuit of ontological security as the effort to preserve 'social representations' of concepts such as home, society, and 'nature'. Unlike Harries' work, however, this research is firmly sociological in approach. In Chapter 3 I further discuss the conceptualisation and role of symbolic meaning in this thesis, and the remainder of this chapter explores the links between the forest as symbol, these six operationalised points, and ontological security.

I have retained the basic elements of Dupuis and Thorns' model, as they are appropriate for understanding the ways that Tasmanian forests, much like a home, may symbolise ontological security. Forests have a potentially enduring materiality, symbolising a sense of constancy; forests also represent the routines that individuals perform before, during, and after their forest experiences. As discussed in Chapter 1, the appeal of Tasmanian forests for many people rests in concepts of wilderness, privacy, and 'getting away' – in this way, forests are a place "free from the surveillance that is part of the contemporary world" (Dupuis & Thorns 1998: 29). Finally, as a Tasmanian, the relationship between forests and identity seems quite self-evident; supporting this is a wealth of literature (discussed below) linking the nonhuman environment

and (various forms of) identity. I have, however, made several significant changes to Dupuis and Thorns' model:

- In point 1, I have focused on material constancy, as the concept of 'social constancy' is somewhat subsumed by the model's other points.
- I have added 'ritual' to point 2. Giddens' focus is on 'routine' as the everyday actions that sustain ontological security through nonconscious and/or reflexive means. Dupuis (2012: 58) argues that "[p]erhaps the most salient characteristic of routine is familiarity", which is a useful definition for considering the links between forests and ontological security. Where routine is about familiarity and past action, however, ritual is concerned with liminality, transition, and the future; as I will explore below, this closely aligns with my conceptualisation of ontological security. I argue that while different, routine and ritual are conceptually similar enough to both merit consideration in this thesis.
- I have added the concept of 'threats' to point 3. As Dupuis (2012: 158) explains, Dupuis and Thorns' model refers to "home as a refuge from the outside world", reflecting the experiences of their participants who felt that "homeownership … let them 'do their own thing'". Forests operate in a similar way (particularly in more remote or private forest spaces), but the introduction of 'threats' also incorporates relevant concepts of 'wilderness' and 'nature' as good for human health, in contrast to the perceived threats to human wellbeing (such as stress, technology, pollution, and lack of exercise) embedded in contemporary built environments.
- In point 4, I have specified 'self-narrative' (rather than Dupuis and Thorns' vague 'identities') to more closely reflect Giddens' work. Self-narrative also contains a more

explicit temporal dimension than many models of self-identity, making it appropriate for models of ontological security.

- The major change I have made from Dupuis and Thorns' (1998) model is the addition of points 5 ('Tasmanian forests as symbolic of the nonhuman') and 6 ('Tasmanian forests as symbolic of the future'). This is primarily due to the larger context of my research, compared to Dupuis and Thorns' (where they have focused on the immediate context of an individual's own home, although point 6 may have been a welcome addition to their model). As in environmental philosophy literature (such as Naess' [1989] work on 'deep ecology'), understandings of the environment often speak to 'big-picture' concepts such as ontology, survival, and the (unknown) future. The environment literally homes all species, with all humans (and nonhumans) dependent upon it for wellbeing and survival. Human-nonhuman interactions also implicate issues of 'naturalness' and 'humanness', including the assumed 'exemptionalism' of humans (Dunlap 1980). Points 5 and 6 speak to these complexities, as well as Giddens' second 'existential question' (1991: 48-49): "the relations between the external world and human life [including] a fundamental temporal aspect, in the guise of human finitude as compared to temporal infinity or the 'eternal'".

Through this model, I do not mean to suggest that such (positive) experiences of Tasmanian forests are universal. Some Tasmanians find forests frightening, alienating, or intimidating; others may simply be apathetic or indifferent about forest spaces. Socio-historical influences also shape responses to nonhuman ecosystems (Moran 2006; Aberth 2013; White et al. 2016). The intention of this operationalisation is simply to illustrate how ontological security

potentially operates for those Tasmanians who do encounter the state's forests as symbolic of acceptance and assurance, and as contributing to their sense of ontological security.

Humans, nonhumans, and ontological security

> [During whale-watching] the whale may be interpreted mistakenly as the message instead of the messenger.
>
> Milstein (2008: 186)

As this quote from Milstein (2008) alludes, my argument is not that Tasmanian forests are the bringers of ontological security in and of themselves; touching a Huon Pine or walking the Overland Track does not spontaneously induce a sense of ontological security. Rather, in encountering forests, individuals engage in processes of meaning-making, interpreting and interacting with the forest on the basis of the meanings it holds for them. Tasmanian forests are therefore symbolic of that which affirms and/or challenges a sense of ontological security – they are the messenger, not the message.

The previous section has briefly summarised the empirically observable ways in which I argue that this process occurs. This section elaborates on these six points, outlining writers' engagements with the key themes and concepts which constitute my model of ontological security. This is not an exhaustive review of the literature concerned with human-nonhuman/forest interactions. Rather, it is a 'road-map' of the central ideas that demonstrate the deductive logic and process behind this research: theory-testing ontological security as a

useful framework in understanding human-forest engagements. For ease of navigation, this section is organised by the six operationalised points.

Forests as symbolic of material constancy

Forests are symbolic of material constancy, acting as a material manifestation of the familiar past and 'predictable' future. In Giddens' (1991: 92) own words, ontological security is the "confidence that most human beings have in … the constancy of their social and *material* environments. Basic to a feeling of ontological security is a sense of the reliability of persons and *things*" [emphasis added]. While some writers engaging with ontological security neglect this important link between materiality and ontological security (Dupuis & Thorns 1998), materiality is a particularly significant concept for understandings of nonhuman symbols of ontological security. While it seems needlessly obvious to state that forests are material spaces, human bodies significantly encounter the forest's tangle of trees, fungi, lichen, animals, insects, rocks, and weather, and this materiality shapes human-forest interactions.

While I agree with Dupuis and Thorns' (1998) assertion that built environments provide a potential site of ontological security, there can surely be no more permanent site of material constancy – and potentially, a sense of home (Skey 2011) – than the Earth itself. Cresswell (2015: 39) explains that for prominent theorist Tuan, "geography is the study of Earth as the home of people", evoking the same sentiment as Carl Sagan's (1994: 12) famous description of our planet:

> Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives.

As a synecdoche of the earth, forests symbolise this material constancy as a tangible manifestation of the past and future. In general terms, ontological security is a sense of being "at home in a world which can appear external and threatening" (Dupuis and Thorns 1998: 30). While forests (and the Earth itself) may be interpreted by some as 'external and threatening', they may provide for others a sense of 'home' and belonging (Svarstad 2010: 101). This positive (loving, home-like) orientation towards place is reflected in concepts such as topophilia (Tuan 1974) – the emotional and relational connection between people and places – and solastalgia (Albrecht et al. 2007; Head 2016), a sense of suffering induced by changes that impact upon one's 'home place'. Globally, humans are largely moving away from being literally at home in forests; yet forests are an integral part of the planet that houses all humans, and people can feel attachment and yearning for these spaces. It is reasonable to argue that forests can therefore provide individuals with a feeling of belonging which approximates those feelings of security felt in the home. The materiality of other significant spaces could also contribute to such a sense of home and belonging, with housing being the obvious example; other examples may include places of employment, or other meaningful work. (This also suggests that the ontological security of Tasmanian forestry workers could likewise be constructed through the state's forests; however, no participants of the research fit this criterion.) However, it is not a universal experience of Tasmanians to encounter the state's forests as places of comfort and familiarity. Forests can alienate, injure, and frighten people, and these experiences may

undermine the ability of the forest to symbolise a positive material constancy for certain people.

Social science disciplines are increasingly recognising the significance of materiality and 'material cultural studies' (for example, Knappett and Malafouris' [2008] and Hicks and Beaudry's [2010] collected volumes). Included in these studies are themes such as nonhuman agency, the materiality of particular objects and 'cultural landscapes' (Head 2010), and the significance of materiality in social processes such as gift exchange (Miyazaki 2010) and scientific practice (as in Bruno Latour's various works). The key argument to highlight here – and one that resonates throughout the materiality literature – is that materiality has the ability to inform human identities and lives. As Young (2005: 140) explains in her feminist analysis of home, "[m]aterial things and spaces themselves become layered with meaning and personal value as the material markers of events and relationship that make the narrative of a person or group". This statement is very similar to the idea of material constancy as an aspect of ontological security – that is, materiality as the 'marker' of a narrative of past, future, place, and belonging, thus informing human lives.

A number of theorists incorporate these concepts of materiality into studies of the nonhuman environment. Ingold (2000) – one of many influenced by the thinking of Heidegger – describes the 'dwelling perspective'. Arguing that Heidegger's questions of dwelling may be stated simply as 'what does it take for a house to be a home?' Ingold (2000: 186) argues that humans do not dwell (live) in a world already built but rather, that humans build (structures, homes, ideas) *because* they dwell in the world:

> In short, people do not import their ideas, plans or mental representations into the world, since that very world, to borrow a phrase from Merleau-Ponty (1962: 24), is the homeland of their thoughts. Only because they already dwell therein can they think the thoughts they do.

It is not within the scope of this chapter to dissect the complexities of Ingold's work (particularly as it concerns nonhuman agency and human-nature binaries). The dwelling perspective's significance is in its argument that the material world precedes and recreates human and nonhuman lives. Material environments such as forests are therefore significant as a representation of the past and the future.

Although not the explicit point of either author, two texts that draw together these strands of thought – forests as home and belonging, and the significance of materiality for human lives – are Ezzy (2004) and Kimmerer (2013). Ezzy (2004: 20), writing about his relationship with Tasmania, describes a sense of 'geographical ontology':

> In Hobart geographical nature becomes a backdrop against which individuals orient themselves, not only in a geographical sense, but more profoundly in an ontological and, I would argue, ethical sense. Hobart is a distinctive city in a number of ways … Wherever you look, human habitation is overshadowed by nonhuman geography. There is a more subtle ontological shift that sits alongside this geographical optic. Humans are part of nature, not its overlords. Nature impinges on all parts of Hobart … Life is lived with a strong awareness of the forces of nature that transcend, or are not entirely controlled by humans.

Here, Ezzy (2004) is describing the way that the unique qualities of particular nonhuman materialities impact upon the lives of those humans it interacts with, resulting in a relationship which is marked by the nonhumans' precedence *and* continuity. As Milton (2002: 149) points out, "diverse personal experiences generate diverse emotional attachments. Some people learn to enjoy wild, rugged landscapes while others learn to love woodlands, or deserts, or cities". The insightful argument here is not the value or consequences of specific landscapes over others, but that the materiality of specific landscapes is influential in individuals' lives because of memory, interaction, and relationship. Similarly, Kimmerer's (2013) narrative is one of being 'raised by strawberries' – that is, the experience of finding one's place within the nonhuman world by way of relationship with material conditions. While the focus of both Ezzy (2004) and Kimmerer's (2013) arguments are the ethical nature of these relationships, what I find interesting here is the sense of finding one's place in the world by way of engaging with nonhuman materiality. Or, put another way, I argue that materiality plays a significant role in temporally locating oneself, as material conditions 'set the rules' of what has been, and what is yet to come (see also West et al. 2006; Lien & Davison 2010). This informs ontological security, by providing a material (and temporal) grounding that assures an individual about the past and future.

Forests as symbolic of routine and ritual

Forests are symbolic of routines and rituals. These routines and rituals work to affirm the past through the performance of (temporally and spatially) familiar actions, and/or facilitate transitions into an anticipated future. This differs from Dupuis and Thorns' (1998: 29) conceptualisation of home as a "spatial context" for routine, which focuses on the spatially-

located and performative elements of everyday routines. Instead, my model considers Tasmanian forests as symbolic of those routines and rituals that signify significant elements of the passage of time, states of being, and relational bonds. That is, Tasmanian forests as a *symbol* of performance of these personally-significant experiences.

The built structure of a Christian church illustrates the nuance of this distinction. The church and its constituent parts can be both setting and symbol, of routine (such as in weekly attendance) and ritual (such as a wedding ceremony). The church spatially hosts these events, but the building's constituent parts also symbolise meaningful aspects of routine and ritual; a cross may symbolise faith in sacrifice and redemption, a sermon may symbolise the moral teachings of the denomination, and the building itself may symbolise significant experiences of community congregation. The present community backlash against the sale of Anglican church buildings in Tasmania demonstrates the significance of this symbolism. While the diocese selected the buildings slated for sale based on low "future viability", the Anglican Bishop of Tasmania has reassured members that they are not "closing any churches, only buildings" (Shine 2018; see also Ogilvie 2018b). In this example, it is what the buildings symbolise for community members that is driving resistance to change. Tasmanian forests may operate in much the same way, symbolising routines and rituals which facilitate a sense of ontological security. Tasmanian forests may act as a *site* in which some routines and rituals take place; that is, they are the material setting for routine/ritual actions (much like as in Dupuis and Thorns' model). However, this does not exclude forests (and their constituent parts, from trees and rivers to walking tracks and seasonal changes) from also being *symbolic* of routines and rituals. Walking a forest track to observe the blooming of an orchid, for example, may

symbolise for one person the changing of the seasons; for another, walking that same track could symbolise a commitment to staying active in older age. What is significant for my argument is that the forest stands as a symbol of that which the individual performs for significant reasons, rather than simply 'hosting' the routine or ritual. This connotes a sense of relationship between the individual and the symbol, constructed and experienced through the performance of routine and ritual.

Giddens (1990: 98) states that "[o]ntological security and routine are intimately connected". He argues that routines – familiar, habitual, taken-for-granted practices – play an important role in 'shielding' the individual from the chaos of unpredictability. Saldaña and Omasta (2018: 15-16) describe routines as "actions that take care of the everyday business of living, symbolize our self-cultivated and socialized habits, and meet our human need to create a sense of order", suggesting that researchers may "learn much from how people handle, avoid, and prevent the glitches that come their way". The significance of routines therefore lies in their ability to provide a sense of security as a performative familiarity with the past. As I discussed above, Giddens (1991) argues that in pre-modern society routines took place 'closer to (nonhuman) nature', linking the process more effectively with a sense of ontological security than those routines in contemporary built environments do. I hesitate to agree with this argument (as do Dupuis and Thorns [1998: 28], who argue that Giddens' "position takes on something of an anti-urban tone"), as it seems to reflect contemporary romanticism of the 'natural' as unequivocally positive. Nonetheless, this research is concerned with routines and rituals that individuals perform before, during, and after their forest interactions. These are actions which Dupuis (2012: 158) refers to "familiar space-time paths".

Rituals essentially differ from routines in terms of personal significance. Saldaña and Omasta (2018: 17), for example, simply define rituals as "transcend[ing] the routines of everyday matters because of the pattern's significance … for the individual or group". This definition is appropriate for this inquiry in its emphasis upon the individual; further, Saldaña and Omasta's phrasing acknowledges that while everyday life features rituals, a ritual is structured behaviour. Atkinson (2015: 87) describes rituals as having "a recurrent, underlying grammar", explaining that rituals "provide a form of performative punctuation in the passage of mundane time and the life-course". The ritual action itself need not be formal, or highly regulated; the point here is that rituals are behaviour with collective meaning that act as a form of 'observance' (Atkinson 2015).

The study of rituals has a well-established history in the social sciences (particularly in anthropology). Two classic 'genres' of ritual (particularly relevant to this thesis) are rites of passage and calendrical rituals. The performance of a rite of passage 'moves' the individual from one state (status, identity, experience) to another, linking ritual to concepts such as liminality, transition, and pilgrimage (van Gennep 1960; Turner 1969). Drawing on Turner, Ezzy (2014: 12) explains that "the liminal phase of rituals are chaotic and often transgress everyday norms. However, on leaving the ritual participants are safely returned to their everyday status". Calendrical rituals are those that add "socially meaningful definitions to the passage of time", marking cycles, seasons, and other significant time periods (Bell 1997). Like self-narrative (discussed below), calendrical rituals have elements of both past and future temporality. The predictability of calendrical rituals has an obvious association with ontological security,

particularly regarding the nonhuman. As Bell (1997: 102) explains, calendrical rituals "often [evoke] a rich set of associations between the seasons of nature and the rhythm of social life".

Both rites of passage and calendrical rituals mark non-usual and/or predictable occasions, and potentially provide "alternative temporal schemas" (Wagner-Pacifici 2000: 73). They also serve a role in 'delivering' the individual into a new, changed future. Atkinson (2015: 87) argues that archetypal rituals are "often marked by symbolic forms of reversal … [and] ceremonials of cleansing and emptying", where "time and celebrants are suspended in liminal states … between the 'before' and 'after' of the transitions". Where routines symbolise the familiar past, rituals symbolise a 'safe' encounter with the negotiated future.

There are numerous examples of ritual – both rites of passage and calendrical rituals – as performed in interaction with the nonhuman. Hutton (2001), for example, comprehensively details the historical and present rituals that mark time over the course of a year in Britain (the 'wheel of the year'). Hutton (2001) concludes that where engagement with the nonhuman (and with community) had previously been the primary shaper of ritual time, these processes (and thus people) have become individualised and divorced from the rhythms of the nonhuman world. This conclusion echoes Giddens' argument regarding pre-modern and contemporary routines. Even in contemporary Western societies, however, some rituals still take place in intimate dialogue with the nonhuman environment. For example, Tramacchi's (2000) study of 'bush doofs' (psychedelic dance events) emphasises the significance of an Australian forest setting for the ritualised doof experience. The Burning Man festival, which takes place annually in the Nevada desert, is a similar example. The desert setting co-creates the ritual of the festival,

which Gilmore (2010: 103) describes as an embodied pilgrimage to "a distant wilderness" where participants are encouraged to 'leave no trace'. Here the desert symbolises not only the self-empowerment experienced in 'surviving' the landscape's conditions, but also a "temporary autonomous zone on which new identities may be inscribed" (Gilmore 2010: 104). It is the contrast between the desert at large and the 'safe space' of the festival, Gilmore (2010: 126) argues, that allows for a shift where the nonhuman environment "can be productively perceived as other … generat[ing] critical transformation for many participants".

Other writers have also explored routine in relation to the nonhuman. As previously discussed, Norgaard's (2006) work explores the role of routine in the maintenance of ontological security in the face of observed climate change, arguing that her participants engaged in these emotional and communication norms to "protect themselves a bit". Singh's (2013) and Jokinen and Holma's (2001) quite different studies of forest management both implicate routine behaviours in the development of individuals' relationships with forests. Incidentally, both Norgaard (2006) and Jokinen and Holma (2001) incorporate elements of ontological security into their analyses. These examples are illustrative of the vast array of literature exploring ritual and routine relating to the nonhuman environment. The central unit of analysis in most of these examples is the performance of the relevant ritual, but an understanding of the symbolic significance of the relevant nonhuman (species or landscape) would often offer further insight.

While I have defined routine and ritual separately here for the sake of clarity, I am not advocating for a strict delineation of the two terms. In everyday conversation, people often use 'ritual' and 'routine' interchangeably (including some of the participants of this study); as

Saldaña and Omasta (2018: 16) pithily put it, "[w]hat is considered routine to one person could be deemed a ritual to another". In linking ontological security to forest experiences, the distinction is of little importance. What is of significance is the way that the forest setting – acting as a symbol of that which the routine or ritual 'delivers' – works to affirm an individual's familiarity with the past, and peace with the impending future. This is the link between the forests as a symbol of routine and ritual, and forests as contributing to a sense of ontological security.

Forests as symbolic of escape and refuge

Forests are symbolic of escape from the surveillance and threats of the contemporary world, acting as a symbol of refuge. This perception of refuge facilitates a sense of independence, control, and a promise of future wellbeing - a "feeling [of being] protected [that] fosters the development of the self by providing the invulnerability required for a person to exercise autonomy and elaborate his/her identity" (Hiscock et al. 2001: 53). In contemporary (and particularly Western) societies – especially where large sections of the population live in urban areas – popular discourse frames forests as spaces that are 'remote', 'distant', and fundamentally 'not-urban'. Parallel to this framing is the supposition that the nonhuman environment is a space which offers benefits to human health and wellbeing. In this way, forests (alongside other nonhuman environments) symbolise escape and refuge, being a space away from the surveillance of the contemporary world, a space of privacy, and a space in which to regain a sense of wellbeing depleted by everyday engagement with built environments. The 'wilderness' rhetoric described in Chapter 1 is a classic example of the effectiveness of these assumptions, and illustrates the relevance of this framing to experiences of Tasmanian forests.

Again, experiencing such positive associations with forest spaces is by no means universal. Forests can be scary, literally life-threatening spaces; yet despite this (or perhaps because of this, where a sense of danger reinforces the perception of forests as remote), there is a mainstream assumption of the refuge offered by nonhuman environments. Perhaps this sense of refuge would not be so salient to those whose (surveilled) employment takes place in a forest setting, such as forestry workers; conversely, such work could in fact hold appeal for the very reason of taking place 'away from it all'.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Giddens (1991) argues that the sequestration of the nonhuman (the process by which the nonhuman is 'pushed away' from everyday life and awareness) is a significant aspect of living in high modernity. This suggests a possible tension. On one hand, forests may symbolise a positive sense of escape; on the other, confrontation with a sequestered space could (according to Giddens' thinking) undermine ontological security. I suggest that this tension is resolved in the fact that most contemporary (Western/Tasmanian) humans now encounter forests in ways that make the space 'manageable':

> As the sociologist Mike Michael (2009) observed, smartphones, maps, snacks, water bottles, hiking boots, water proofs, parking lots with carefully sculpted 'scenic views' and fleshy humans are all carefully brought together on walking trips in the Lake District to allow us to 'get away from it all'. (White et al. 2016: 8)

This is not to suggest that these forest experiences are in some way 'inauthentic', or that there does not remain the potential for dangerous or elemental human-forest interactions (even in

the relative calm of UK's Lake District). Rather, my argument is that the sequestration of forests does not undermine the contribution of a sense of refuge and escape to an individual's ontological security. Indeed, sequestration could contribute to a sense of ontological security, through highlighting a sense of autonomy, self-empowerment, and wellbeing.

Forest experiences may grant a sense of being 'in control'; like the home, forests can operate as a space where people feel they have freedom in their behaviour (Dupuis 2012). In their research exploring tourist experiences (coincidentally also in the Lake District), Jepson and Sharpley (2015: 1169) conclude that:

> … significant to the respondents was the opportunity to enjoy solitude; indeed, this was a theme raised by all interviewees, identifying it not only as an essential element of the rural experience but also as a fundamental element to their lives more generally.

This sense of solitude and rurality underpins the appeal of 'wilderness' and 'wild areas' (of which forests are an archetypal example) as a privileged space in which one has control over elements of their (human-human) social interactions by virtue of the privacy granted by remoteness. Young (2005: 152) eloquently describes privacy as "the autonomy and control a person has to allow or not allow access to her person, information about her, and the things that are meaningfully associated with her person". I argue that 'wilderness' (or the perception thereof) likewise presents a means of controlling one's embodied, spatial, communicative, and socially obligatory contact with others.

This approach to wilderness is historically and culturally contingent. Colonisers encountering (to them) unknown landscapes attempted to 'tame' the spaces through actions such as building gardens and fences, and the introduction of familiar species (Seed 1995; Anderson 2003; Merchant 2007). These reactions reinforce the connection between remoteness and control; colonial relations to the nonhuman may see control as attained through such measures, while others (with different relationships with the nonhuman) may see control as granted by being able to interact with the forest through less invasive measures (such as walking tracks). While there are undoubtedly many Tasmanians whose views align more closely with the former interpretation, 'remoteness' and 'wilderness' are now often perceived as a positive attribute of forest spaces (Trudgill 2001).

Terms such as 'escape' and 'refuge' have implications of wellbeing and safety. The perceived link between nonhuman ecosystems and human wellbeing – including the 'restorative' nature of human-nonhuman interactions – is well-established in the literature (Jepson & Sharpley 2015: 1167). This link also has an entrenched history in Australian bushwalking culture and environmentalism, with twentieth century 'bushwalking pioneer' Myles Dunphy proclaiming that such experiences are "good for the mind, the soul, and the country" (Hutton & Connors 1999: 65). Writers express this perception of wellbeing in many ways. A well-known example is the 'biophilia hypothesis', in which Wilson (1984) argues that there is a biological imperative in humans to seek connection with the nonhuman. Where positivistic natural science disciplines have focused on the concept of 'ecosystem services', Díaz et al (2018: 270) propose a shift in focus to 'nature's contributions to people': "all the contributions, both positive and negative, of living nature (diversity of organisms, ecosystems, and their associated ecological

and evolutionary processes) to people's quality of life". Popular media also commonly advocates for contact with nonhuman environments as important for human health and wellbeing. Similarly, Tasmania's tourism branding largely relies on the perception of the island as a 'clean and green' getaway, with advertisers spruiking the world's 'cleanest air', and the luxury afforded by the state's forest reserves. Returning to the Lake District example, Jepson and Sharpley (2015: 1158-1166) argue that the touristic appeal of such areas links to the connotations of wellbeing and the "contrast with the 'unnaturalness' of urban centres", noting that "it was clearly evident that the slower pace of life away from urban areas was emotionally significant to the respondents". Similarly, Svarstad (2010: 99) describes hiking as "a way of living out a critique of society", with participants of her study expressing "strong criticism of modern aspects of society such as urbanization, a focus on commodities and shopping, the lack of silence, the lack of natural surroundings, [and] tight time schedules".

While there is a latent tension between forests as a site of escape and refuge, on one hand, and potential alienation and danger on the other, it is evident that there is a deeply entrenched association between nonhuman environments and wellbeing. For the argument of this thesis, I am not particularly interested in whether (or in what ways) forest experiences demonstrably affect individual's health outcomes. Rather, I am interested in how forests act as a symbol of escape and refuge, and how subsequent perceptions of wellbeing, autonomy, and control contribute to experiences of ontological security. The ways that individuals negotiate tensions between wellbeing and danger – and subsequently relate to forests in such a way that these spaces come to symbolise autonomy, control, and future wellbeing – is of most significance here.

Forests as symbolic of self-narrative

Forests are symbolic of an individual's 'self-narrative': the biography of their personal experience of the familiar past and anticipated future. As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, the link between nonhuman environments and identity has a well-established place in environmental sociology (alongside related disciplines). Examples include work that explores collective identity, particularly regarding environmentalism and activism (Taylor 1996; Saunders 2008; Ackland & O'Neil 2011); the links between national identity, nationalism, and nonhuman environments (Harvey 1996: 171); and the growing 'decolonising' recognition of narratives linking indigenous identities and the nonhuman, including Australian Aboriginal and Māori identities and narratives (Rose 1996; O'Connor & Macfarlane 2002; Moreton-Robinson 2015; Clément 2016). There is also a growing body of social psychological literature exploring identity, environmental behaviour, and place attachment (Clayton 2012; Whitmarsh & O'Neill 2010). Alongside collective conceptualisations of environmentalism, studies such as Cianchi's (2015) offer more individualistic accounts of environmental experiences. However, connections with the nonhuman are not synonymous with environmentalism, and those people not traditionally associated with environmentalism – including loggers – may also express and experience love of forests (Trigger 1999; Clayton 2003).

'Self-narrative' is a specific conceptualisation of self-identity. As above, there are numerous examples of writers who link aspects of self-identity with experiences of the nonhuman. These authors commonly explore the process of (often environmentalist) identity-making that takes place in-situ; for example, see Trigger and Mulcock (2005), Lien and Davison (2010), Urquhart

and Acott (2014), and Cianchi (2015). These examples illustrate that there is a varied and established body of knowledge exploring the negotiation and experience of self-identity in relation to the nonhuman environment. In this thesis, I have specifically adopted a framework of 'self-narrative' to examine this process. This terminology follows Giddens' work, and is an approach to self-identity that allows deep consideration of the links between self-identity and ontological security, given its explicitly temporal and individualistic nature. As I demonstrate, self-narrative also insightfully incorporates relevant notions of relationship, interpretation, and interaction.

As described earlier, self-narrative is a central component of ontological security. As the name suggests, self-narrative is a biographical story, the establishment of which informs the individual's sense of self and behaviour (Giddens 1991). According to Giddens, the establishment of the self is a reflexive process, through which the individual forms their identity through a sense of trajectory progressing from the past into the future. This story of the self is the 'main event' for the individual, taking precedence in perception over outside events (which are conceptualised and integrated as part of the 'story'). The establishment of this internal biography is predicated upon constancy, and the demarcation of personal time; it is a reflexively embodied experience that takes place through 'passages' (or life stages) through which the individual balances potential opportunities and risks. There is a link, also, between familial ties and self-narrative. Giddens mostly restricts this discussion to the infant-caretaker relationship, but relationship is an integral part of the self-narrative throughout the life span.

'Place' is a central idea in studies of self-identity (including self-narrative) and the nonhuman environment. 'Place' is "physical space imbued with meaning" (Low & Altman 1992: 5); originating in the field of geography, the concept is now in common usage throughout environmental social science literature. Cantrill (1998: 303) suggests that the consensus of this literature is that places matter to people insofar as they represent "what is most salient in a specific location, which may be reflected in value preferences or how that specific place figures in discourse". It is not in the scope of this chapter to provide an in-depth discussion of the wide body of place literature. Of relevance here are three key points: firstly, that a space becomes a 'place' through processes of location, material locale, meaning, belonging, and practice (Cresswell 2004; 2015; Degnen 2016); secondly, that relationship, memory, embodiment, emotion, and experience are also important aspects of place attachment (Degnen 2016; Milton 2002); and thirdly, that place attachment may therefore inform the self-narrative, through the association between personal temporality and materiality, with personal time marked and shaped through engagement with meaningful places. This engagement occurs through meaning-making and practice. Degnen (2016: 1646) focuses on the role of relationship and temporality in the creation of place, arguing that:

> … the existing place attachment literature focuses largely on how individual people experience and make sense of place. What is less evident in the literature is a consideration of how place attachment is forged and experienced in dynamic interaction with other entities and other processes: how place attachment is also a collective, relational and embodied process, caught up and experienced via social memory practices and via embodied, sensorial registers … In particular, my aim is to begin thinking through the

> ways in which place attachment is bound up in social memory, embodied knowledge and the significance of the passage of time.

Drawing on Rowles' concept of 'autobiographical insideness', Degnen (2016: 1649) goes on to explain that:

> … autobiographical insideness refers to the way in which people narrate their connection to place and build a sense of identity through the stories they tell about what has transpired through their lives in the sites and locales in their local environment.

The work of Degnen and Rowles clearly demonstrates the connection between place and self-narrative. Broadly, the literature concerning place emphasises that as humans become familiar with spaces, they engage in processes of meaning-making which grant certain spaces the significance of being a 'place'. This is a form of relationship with the nonhuman – a sense of acquaintance with that which has been present throughout the individual's lived experiences.

As with the description above of routine and ritual, Tasmanian forests act as both setting and symbol of (some) individuals' self-narratives. Forests can be spaces which represent temporal, emotional, and relational elements of self-narrative, particularly (as is most salient in this thesis) through forest activities such as bushwalking. Banham (2017) argues that experiences of bushwalking are bound up with self-narrative in a number of ways, operating as a means of contact with forest spaces which facilitate engagement with life passages, trajectory, personal time, and reflexivity. Recreation is not the only way that this process may occur; undertaking a forest-related career (where the forest is both the site and symbol of one's employment), or a

personally meaningful enterprise such as wilderness photography or animal care may also reinforce the links between forests and self-narrative. Regardless of the self-narrative's content, the point here is that as meaningful places, forests may operate as a symbol of significant aspects of the individual's story of their past and future, contributing to a sense of ontological security.

Forests as symbolic of the nonhuman

Forests are symbolic of the nonhuman, operating as a means of contextualising ontological understandings – understandings of what it is to be human – in the midst of that which precedes and outlasts the individual. This aspect of my model of ontological security has similarities with the concept of material constancy. Where material constancy focuses on the individual's personal relationship with materiality, however, 'forest as symbolic of the nonhuman' is concerned with the abstract, human-universal dimensions of human-nonhuman relationships. Earlier I referred to Sagan's (1994) proclamation of the 'pale blue dot' that is humans' planetary home. Following that quote, Sagan (1994: 13) goes on to argue that:

> Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light.

Put simply, the nonhuman environment and its constituent parts (including forests) operate as a means of situating ourselves ontologically in the world. As Abram (1996: ix) clearly puts it, "we are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human"; knowing what it means to be human is a situated practice, informed by the nonhuman world. Abram's argument is one of advocacy for nonhuman ethics, and is an acknowledgement of a network

of humans and nonhumans (between whom there is a lack of firm boundaries). However, these notions do not feature in the ontological understandings of many humans, who may operate in the world on the assumption that there *are* firm boundaries between humans and nonhumans. The usefulness of Abram's comment is in its illustration that human-nonhuman relationships – whatever the quality of those relationships – inform ontological understandings of what it means to be human.

There are myriad ways in which humans express their relation to the nonhuman, and these processes are historically, socially, and culturally situated. Social science and philosophical literature often presents human orientations towards the nonhuman – that is, human valuation, understandings, definitions, and practices towards the nonhuman – as positioned within an overly simplistic anthropocentric-ecocentric binary (Pointon 2014; Cianchi 2015). As broad categorisations, anthropocentrism (human-centric ways of being) and ecocentrism (a 'levelling' of human and nonhuman needs and rights) are useful, but it is important to acknowledge that these orientations exist as a spectrum, rather than a dichotomy.

Western ontologies tend to be anthropocentric in nature. This is the basic position that a huge array of writers – notably Bruno Latour, Tim Ingold, Nigel Clark, Val Plumwood, and Donna Haraway – have worked to undermine, and informs the arguments regarding human-nature binaries and nonhuman agency discussed in Chapter 1. Critique of the dominance of Western ontologies also informs the more general decolonisation and 'ontological turn' of the social sciences and geography (Clément 2016). Western ontological approaches to the nonhuman tend to emphasise capitalist, economic, and instrumental attitudes (Harvey 1996); the pursuit

of these human-centric concerns is inherent to capitalist and expansionist industries and organisations, and politically explicit in the case of lobbies such as the Wise Use movement (Helvarg 2004). Ethical positions such as human rights may inform anthropocentric approaches (Boyd 2011), as may religious convictions such as Christian stewardship (Hart 2006) (indeed, White's [1967] famous thesis is that Christianity is to blame for environmental degradation). Western scientific orientations towards environmental issues tend to 'depersonalise' the nonhuman; Milton (2002: 53) argues that this leads to a view that "[i]nstead of taking from persons, we are taking from impersonal things and substances … science serves capitalism very well by making the exploitations of nature morally acceptable". Clearly, these ontological approaches tend to emphasise human agency, and place humans at the centre of considerations. Anthropocentrism is not necessarily synonymous with selfishness, but such approaches do necessarily reinforce human-nature binaries. One concern raised by anthropocentric approaches is the lack of language they provide for emotional responses and connections to the nonhuman. As Kidner (2012: 235; original emphasis) argues:

> … a tree I have known all my life would be part of a context that is temporally meaningful, locating me within a world that makes sense; and the psychological impact of the destruction of such a tree may be compared to that of bereavement … Such embodied feelings of loss, because they do not correspond to a cognitively, legally, or economically recognised loss, are *invisible* to the economic system.

In societies where state power and decision-making generally reside in spheres of economics, technology, and industry, there exists little 'language' with which to see and express these kinds of connections to the nonhuman. This is Kidner's argument – these connections may be

'invisible' to dominant systems and cultures, but they exist nonetheless. This erasure begs the acknowledgement (or even the establishment) of language that does recognise and celebrate different forms of human-nonhuman engagement. This is, in part, what a framework of ontological security may begin to create. Ontological security can also draw in dimensions of the emotional significance of human-nonhuman interactions, in ways that the writings of theorists such as Latour sometimes miss.

Broadly speaking, non-anthropocentric approaches to the nonhuman may be termed ecocentric (or biocentric) in nature. Ecocentric approaches have some presence in Western philosophy, notably through perspectives such as deep ecology (Devall & Sessions 1985; Naess 1989), ecofeminism (Radford Reuther 1995), and more-than-human rights (Benton 2009). Cianchi's (2015) study of Tasmanian radical environmentalists also discusses concepts of ecocentrism and nonhuman agency (in a Western context) in depth. These approaches tend to place more emphasis on nonhuman agency than anthropocentric approaches do. Beliefs and practices such as environmental personhood, animism, and personified nature also act as acknowledgement of nonhuman agency in diverse religious, spiritual, political, and legal contexts (Drew 2013; White 2018). Non-dualistic ontologies tend to be more ecocentric in nature than Western ontologies, often based in concepts of (ethical) kinship relationship between humans and nonhumans (Jones & Boivin 2010). As such, non-dualistic and/or non-Western ontologies do not necessarily abide by human-nature binaries to the same extent as Western thinking does. White et al. (2016: 37; original emphasis) explain that:

> … the very idea that 'society' or 'culture' and 'nature' stand as two relatively clear and distinct domains of reality is by no means a cultural universal …

> Descola (1996), for example, has argued that many non-Western people have either not recognized the very distinction between 'culture' and 'nature' or they have deployed very different terminology and models to make these distinctions … the questions of *who* should locate the domain of culture and who should locate the domain of nature has never been a simple empirical question. It has always been a *deeply political question*.

While I acknowledge that non-Western ontologies tend to be more ecocentric in approach than Western ontologies, it is important to recognise that my doing so is also influenced by persistent and problematic patterns of indigenous peoples being viewed as being 'closer to nature' (see also Haynes 2006: 10). Works critiquing this notion include Ellen's (1986) critique regarding the myth of 'green primitivism', and Rose's (1996: 4) argument that "every moment spent in a fruitless debate about whether or not Aboriginal people had the kind of conservation ethic that is familiar to non-Aboriginal people is a moment wasted". Following Todd (2016), I also acknowledge that indigenous concepts from across the globe pre-date many conceptions of ontology (mis)represented in Western literature. Nevertheless, I do not mean here to advocate for any given approach to human-nonhuman relationships, ontologies, or agencies over another (beyond critique where I see cit due). Rather, my point here is that there is a long-established link between human ontology and the nonhuman, making this theme a suitable addition to this thesis' model of ontological security.

Any given approach to the nonhuman – viewing the nonhuman as kin, as a resource, as a God-given responsibility, as a human right, or any other approach imaginable – shapes one's perception of humans' place in the world. Ontology and agency, understood via relationship

with the nonhuman, are ways of locating the self in the world (as Kidner's [2012] quote above suggests). Forests are therefore not only symbolic of the nonhuman, but subsequently symbolic of what I (somewhat unoriginally) term the 'something bigger'. Forests precede the individual, (presumably) outlast the individual, and spatially 'outsize' the individual, representing the network of the nonhuman world in which the individual is one situated being. I consider this process to be akin to that of individual heritage and legacy; situating oneself ontologically provides a sense of where humans come from, what it means to be human today, and therefore what may happen to us in the future. Forests, as symbolic of the nonhuman, therefore act as a contextualising agent of what it means to be human, through representing that which has been and that which is to come – a clear contribution to a sense of ontological security.

Forests as symbolic of the future

Forests are symbolic of the future, and – as the previous subsections have established – the endurance of forests is a vital aspect of how humans relate to these spaces. A family name, company, or property may have value to a person as a potential legacy (and therefore a symbol of the future); events of the past shape the characteristics of these things, and the perceived quality of their future is determined by their present treatment. Clearly, these are quite Western and capitalistic examples, but are analogous to nonhuman ecosystems. Forests, as a synecdoche for these environments, symbolise the future by acting as a representation for the material conditions that will persist long past the individual's life span. The forest therefore 'stands in' as that which is (perceived as) knowable about an unknowable and unpredictable future. This process is an example of perhaps the most basic element of ontological (in)security:

that humans live, to varying degrees, with a sense of trust that the anticipated future is to some extent predictable. The forest – materially tangible and preceding and outlasting individuals – can be that cue.

Considerations of the future are inextricable from considerations of human vulnerability. The concept of ontological security is insightful precisely because thoughts of the future require an acknowledgement – often unconscious, minimised, or avoided, but an acknowledgement nonetheless – that human beings are subject to hurt, harm, and death. Ontological security is a process by which humans cope with this vulnerability. Considering vulnerability is particularly necessary in inquiries concerning the nonhuman environment. As Barry (2012) persistently points out, humans are ultimately dependent upon the nonhuman, yet this is difficult for contemporary humans to accept. Further, as I have previously established, the temporal, spatial, and ontological 'size' of the nonhuman dwarfs the comparative transience of human life, potentially contributing to a sense of human fragility. Finally, the effects of industrialisation, consumerism, and extractive practices upon the nonhuman means that the nonhuman itself is facing unprecedented precarity, therefore threatening the wellbeing of humans and nonhuman species alike. Forests – alongside other nonhuman environments – therefore symbolise a combination of permanence and volatility. Forests are ambivalent; as Ezzy (2004: 26) describes:

> Nature is both my home and not my home. She comforts me and terrifies me, sustains me and threatens to kill me, takes me into her bosom and confronts me as radically other, distanced from me.

Likewise, Nicholsen (2002: 35-36) argues that the nonhuman world "is part of the early home to which we bond and in which we form ourselves, but it is also the unfamiliar world from which we distance ourselves". As such, responses to the nonhuman may be domineering or capitalist, fatalistic, of this world, or transcendent. The commonality of all forms of human-nonhuman relationship is that humans are vulnerable and mortal, but the nonhuman will – in some form – remain.

In this thesis I focus on 'vulnerability' and '(in)security', rather than 'risk' (despite the latter term's wide influence in environmental sociology). 'Risk' may imply that the effects of a condition or actions only affect some or a minority of people; insecurity, on the other hand, is universal (or near to). As Vail (1999: 6) puts it:

> Risk implies a level of objectivity and abstraction that distances us from a direct engagement with what we actually fear … Dangers are perceived through reliance on scientific or professional expertise rather than through our own apprehension. This expertise maintains that it can 'accurately' measure the precise nature and degree of threat (Beck 1995) … Insecurity, on the other hand, is a form of uncertainty that, by its very nature, is not immediately amenable to this sort of calculation, so that it is not meaningful to speak in the language of probabilities … an individual who is hungry or homeless, or has a bad job, or is seriously ill does not need to calculate the likelihood of disaster striking because they are already living this fate.

Here, Vail distinguishes between Beck's influential description of risk – as something that is hypothetically calculable and measurable, developed and monitored by 'experts' – and the

emotional and individual dimensions of insecurity and vulnerability. Similarly, Butler (2009: 25) distinguishes between 'precarity' – "that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer … and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" – and 'precariousness', which is "a feature of all life". Following Wagner-Pacifici (2000), another way to express this is through the concept of 'contingency': the state in which all humans live with exposure to uncertainty and potential disaster. Here I am interested in the incalculable, unquantifiable, the emotional, and the inescapable. I agree with Barry's (2012: 36) argument that "vulnerability is intimately connected to our understanding of what it means to be human", and that the "universality of vulnerability" acts as a commonality that can bring diverse humans together.

Human vulnerability has an intimate connection with the nonhuman through concepts of physical vulnerability and mortality. As in Ezzy's (2004) quote above, the nonhuman has the potential to injure and kill, yet it provides the conditions necessary for life. To at least some extent, humans are dependent on the nonhuman environment. However, as Barry (2012: 38) argues, vulnerability is a sequestered phenomenon, as "[m]odern societies do not operate with a full acknowledgement of how dependent they are on nature - indeed the very renunciation, denial, or concealment of this fact is a mark of their being modern". This is very reminiscent of Latour's (1993) argument about 'modern' life, and is deeply embedded in colonial history; as Haynes (2006: 7) argues, the "level of [Tasmanian Aboriginals'] dependence on their environment both fascinated and disturbed" European colonialists at first contact. Clark (2011: 41) elaborates on this tension:

> I ask what happens when some categories of things rely on other kinds of things in ways which are not reciprocated … What does it mean to say that life, or the earth, or nature, or the universe are not just constellations of material and energy with which humans forge connections, but realities upon which we are utterly dependent – in ways that are out of all proportion to life, nature, the earth or the universe's dependence on us? Turning from the characteristic concern of relational materialities research with the mutual entanglement between nature and human life to the question of a radical asymmetry between the natural and the social, I look at what this implies for human agency, for our capacity to construct, enact, perform, compose, assemble, or otherwise renegotiate the realities in which our lives pass.

Part of Clark's point here – that human dependence has implications for human agency – echoes Barry's argument of the difficulty that contemporary (Western) societies have in accepting such vulnerability. To some extent, humans and nonhumans are in fact interdependent – environmental crises such as climate change and mass extinctions, for example, stand as evidence of humans' ability to impact upon the nonhuman (Moran 2006) – but if anything, this interdependence underscores human vulnerability. We have the potential to destroy ourselves in destroying the nonhuman. In this way, approaches to the nonhuman which deny human vulnerability perhaps create a condition of 'cruel optimism' (Berlant 2011). Intimately connected to physical vulnerability is mortality – the condition of finality and defencelessness that humans share with all living beings.

The relationship between vulnerability and the nonhuman is also one of emotional or existential vulnerability (and indeed, that we may locate a sense of ontological security in forest interactions, as is the argument of this thesis, is deeply reflective of this point). Humans clearly invest themselves emotionally in nonhuman spaces, species, and systems (Read 1996; Vodanovic et al. 2017; Cunsolo & Ellis 2018). A diverse body of literature – including many examples given in this chapter – explores these emotional connections to the nonhuman. As Sayer (2011: 1) describes:

> [Humans] don't just think and interact but evaluate things, including the past and the future … We do so because, while we are capable and can flourish, we are also vulnerable and susceptible to various kinds of loss or harm; we can suffer.

Ahmed (2004) and Barry (2012) both indicate that to be vulnerable is to be open to harmful or emotional effects, or to be 'wounded', with vulnerability inextricably linked to "notions such as harm" and grief (Barry 2012: 34). Caring about the nonhuman is therefore a performance of vulnerability. The classic Tasmanian example is in the flooding of Lake Pedder, mentioned in Chapter 1; Head (2016: 38) argues that there "is no more potent symbol of environmental grief in Australia than Lake Pedder", with Read (1996) similarly describing the grief of encountering this 'lost place'. While there has been something of an 'emotional turn' within the social sciences and human geography (Harries 2016), this comes on the back of a long-entrenched academic delegitimisation of emotion and grief, particularly in contrast to the study of reason and logic (Ahmed 2004; Head & Harada 2017). As Sayer (2011: 2015) succinctly puts it, there is "a kind of macho tendency to view the study of values, emotions and ethics as less scientific than the study of power, discourse and social structure" (see also Ahmed [2004], and

Plumwood [1993] for an environment-centric analysis). However, the privileging and legitimising of individuals' emotional experiences can have profound impacts upon these very structures and, as Seaton (2013: 73) argues, "the validation of emotional and agential relations between human and non-human life allows for more ethical and less destructive engagement". My reason for exploring vulnerability in such depth is to point out that it is a key part of life, and a key part of how humans relate to the nonhuman. Emotion, values, and vulnerability are never meaningless or inconsequential.

Vulnerability is temporal; loss and grief focus upon what has passed (and therefore will not be), while anxiety, hope, fear, and (inter)dependence are all contingent upon what we imagine the future to be. It is therefore essential, in considering the forest as a symbol of the future, to consider the ways that current treatment of the forest shapes experiences of vulnerability. Exploration of ontological security, however, illustrates that humans do find ways of living with this vulnerability; a sense of ontological security is, essentially, a sense of living 'at ease' with vulnerability. By symbolising the future, forests therefore provide a context through which an individual can 'know' the future, while accepting their own vulnerability. The forest can outlast the individual, providing a site and symbol of human and nonhuman wellbeing far into the future; the forest is, therefore, symbolic of that which contributes to a sense of ontological security.

Conclusion

This chapter has defined, critiqued, and explored ontological security as a conceptual framework for understanding human-forest interactions. In looking for answers to my research

interests – why and how people care about Tasmanian forests, and how people negotiate living with/in contingency and vulnerability – ontological security has become increasingly salient to me. This became a particularly pressing issue when I identified the dearth of environmental ontological security literature, as detailed in this chapter. In addressing this literature gap, this chapter has provided a 'road' map of the six key areas of environmental literature that I have used to operationalise and illustrate ontological security.

Ontological security is a situated process; social and material factors shape the ways that individuals pursue, construct, and sustain their sense of ontological security. In this research, this means that symbolic meanings that Tasmanian forests hold for individuals are shaped by both 'big picture' (global, national, Western, colonial) social structures, and the specific history of Tasmania's forest politics. The six key areas of environmental literature detailed in this chapter connect and illustrate the significance of both of these 'levels' of influence.

The following chapter explores the 'doing' of the research. It establishes the epistemological, theoretical, methodological, and practical elements that have enabled me to effectively explore participants' experiences of ontological security, and to privilege the individuality of these experiences.

Chapter 3: Doing the Research

> I'm 52, and for almost all my adult life it's been the same divisiveness in forestry and the environment … there's families who have been involved in forestry for generations. But there's also protesters who have spent months in, you know, in quite life-threatening situations, and are dismissed as idiots, when really they've got something quite central to their lives that they believe in. It's like recognising these things, and finding a place, they can all agree … it's sad that a lot of things are lost because of decisions made by people who either don't care or will never know it … I've respected so much people who did actually head out into contested forests, and then in tents hidden away for months, because there needed to be a presence. People, tree-sitters that stay for months, you know, I see that as being quite a remarkable feat … I think it's important to understand why people feel the way they do, strongly. (Ben)

This quote from participant Ben touches on many of my own motivations in conducting this research: the sense of conflict that has plagued Tasmania, the power dynamics that enable the dismissal of empathy, passion, and grief for the nonhuman, the problematic results of 'taking sides', and the question at the centre of it all – why do some people care so much? I was also struck by Ben's strong sense of the ethical implications of respecting people and forests alike. These are concerns that have driven much of this research and have shaped the choices I have made in this project's design. These concerns also reflect the themes and arguments of the previous two chapters.

This chapter is about the 'doing' of this research project. Following Crotty (1998), I have structured this chapter to illustrate the links between four key aspects of social research:

epistemology, theoretical framework, methodology, and methods. Research design may take different forms, as Sarantakos (2013) and Schwandt (2015) demonstrate through their alternative models. These four aspects identified by Crotty, however, have proved useful in my own conceptualisation of this study's design. A constructionist epistemological position underlies the project, informing and informed by an interpretivist theoretical framework (of primarily symbolic interactionism, with some inspiration from phenomenology). This framework reflects and shapes the project's methodology – a set of concerns which are unique to every individual project (Crotty 1998). Intended to support the creation of a rigorous and ethical research project, these methodological concerns inform the specific methods chosen to gather and analyse the relevant qualitative data, gathered through semi-structured interviews and participant submissions.

Epistemology: Social constructionism

> Epistemology deals with 'the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis' (Hamlyn 1995, p. 242) … [research] involves knowledge, therefore, and embodies a certain understanding of what is entailed in knowing, that is, how we know what we know.
>
> Crotty (1998: 8)

A social constructionist approach informs the epistemological position of this project. Social constructionism embraces the understanding of meanings, categories, experiences, relationships, and 'facts' as socially constructed (to at least some degree). Bryman (2016: 30) explains that "the categories that people employ in helping them to understand the world around them … do not have built-in essences; instead, their meaning is constructed in and

through interaction". Social constructionism rejects objectivist "views[s] of human knowledge" (Crotty 1998: 8), emphasising that meaning is an individual experience.

This epistemological approach is an essential component of my research aims. Firstly, a constructionist epistemology supports and enriches inquiries about the endlessly diverse understandings, experiences, and symbolic meanings attributed by individuals to the same object or subject – in this case, Tasmanian forests. Indeed, social constructionism echoes one of the very questions which sparked my interest in this research topic in the first place: "How can so many people all be looking at the same thing and see it so differently?" (Krien 2012: 146). Secondly, this epistemological position challenges assumptions about conventional understandings of an object or subject, by sincerely valuing the diversity and complexity of individuals' meanings and experiences. Thus, a constructionist epistemology also challenges the assumption that forests are best (or should only be) understood through paradigms of science, technology, anthropocentrism, positivism, and/or Western ontologies. Curiously, a few participants did seem to assume that I had come to this project with a background in disciplines such as ecology or biology (as opposed to my actual experience in sociology and the humanities). I suspect these assumptions reflect the dominance of positivistic paradigms in academic studies of the nonhuman.

In a helpful coincidence for my purposes here, Crotty (1998: 43) illustrates the idea and process of social constructionism through the concept of a tree. He explains that:

> Accepting that the world we experience, prior to our experience of it, is without meaning does not come easy. What the 'commonsense' view

> commends to us is that the tree standing before us is a tree. It has all the meaning we ascribe to a tree. It would be a tree, with that same meaning, whether anyone knew of its existence or not. We need to remind ourselves here that it is human beings who have construed it as a tree, given it the name, and attributed to it the associations we make with trees. It may help if we recall the extent to which those associations differ even within the same overall culture. 'Tree' is likely to bear quite different connotations in a logging town, an artists' settlement, and a treeless slum.

I am concerned with how Tasmanians know, experience, and interact with forests, as informed by the understanding that one individual's experience of the forest is no closer to some 'objective essence' of what the forest is than another person's experience. Constructionism may be criticised as somewhat unrestricted individualism; if individual meanings matter and objects do not have true essences, what is social about constructionism? The answer to this question lies in the social origins of meanings. As Crotty (1998: 54) puts it:

> … while humans may be described, in constructionist spirit, as engaging with their world and making sense of it, such a description is misleading if it is not set in a genuinely historical and social perspective … we are all born into a world of meaning.

Meanings are social insofar as they are shaped by, and shape, the relevant social context. As such, social constructionism is ideal for studies (such as this inquiry) that seek to understand how people relate to the nonhuman in particular social contexts. Social constructionism also affords a base from which to consider the theoretical debates regarding the nonhuman that I

detailed in Chapter 1, and to "consider the ways in which social reality is an ongoing accomplishment of social actors rather than something external to them and that totally constrains them" (Bryman 2016: 30). This epistemological framework informs my exploration of how Tasmanians form and experience relationships with the state's forests, while simultaneously negotiating where humans and nonhumans ontologically 'fit' in the world.

However, I do not align this study with the social constructionist stances variously described as 'hard' or 'strong' constructionism (or as Bryman [2016: 30] puts it, pushing "the constructionist argument to the extreme"). These stances view essentially everything as socially constructed, "appear[ing] to deny any ontology of the real whatsoever" (Schwandt 2015: 38). While not the most flattering name, 'weak' constructionism represents a much more moderate and defendable epistemological position. Schwandt (2015: 38) explains that weak constructionism:

> … would not hold that every object, idea, and so forth in the world, and indeed every aspect of the world (i.e., every thing in itself), is a social construct. Instead of this kind of universal constructivism, weak constructivism might focus on how our experience of some particular object or idea, our classifications of same, and our interest in same are socially constructed. This is a roundabout way of saying that weak social constructionism does not deny reality in the ordinary commonplace sense of that term.

Crucially, a weak constructionist approach recognises that there is no contradiction between epistemological constructionism (the forest as a symbol of constructed meanings), and

ontological realism (the forest as a real object) (Crotty 1998: 63-64; Schwandt 2015: 265). This has significant implications for this research, particularly my argument that the materiality of the nonhuman is an essential aspect of how humans interact with forests. A forest's materiality, 'naturalness', and ability to grow and change are part of what makes them significant to humans. Crotty (1998: 55) argues that:

> The object involved in the social constructionist understanding of meaning formation need not involve persons at all (and therefore need not be 'social' in that sense). The interaction may be, say, with the natural world - the sunset, the mountains, a tree. Natural these objects may be, but it is our culture … that teaches us how to see them - and in some cases whether to see them.

I suggest that there is little value in attempts to strictly separate the material (or physical) spheres of life, and the social (or abstract) spheres. Escobar (1996: 46, in Ambrose-Oji 2010: 316) points out that "there is no materiality unmediated by discourse", but discourse inevitably relies in turn on the character of material objects. Environmental issues are not just material *or* social, and it is important to avoid the social constructionist 'trap' of "distanc[ing] the analysis of environmental problems from the problems themselves" (Woodgate & Redclift 1998: 6). Giddens' concept of the 'double hermeneutic' – which "distinguishes the social sciences from the natural sciences" (Schwandt 2015: 77-78) – also reflects this problem.

A social constructionist epistemology does not necessitate a relativist affording of equal 'weight' to every individual perspective. Rather, social constructionism may encourage critical approaches, and can be useful as a means of prioritising marginalised experiences and

understandings of the world, particularly as this pertains to undermining unproductive or oppressive social patterns. Deferring once more to Crotty (1998: 47-48), I agree that:

> There are useful interpretations, to be sure, and these stand over against interpretations that appear to serve no useful purpose. There are liberating forms of interpretations too; they contrast sharply with interpretations that prove oppressive.

As social structures shape meaning-making, certain symbolic meanings are inevitably prioritised in particular contexts. In light of the state's tumultuous political history, the interpretations of Tasmania's forests that have tended to enjoy mainstream 'legitimacy' have been those that support anthropocentric, instrumental, economic, conservative, technological, and Western interests. This reflects the sequestration of the nonhuman in Western societies. As Barry (2012: 41) argues, sequestration is "one way, the dominant modernist way, to respond to vulnerability … in denying, occluding or hiding vulnerability and dependency away [sequestration] actively contributes to this cultural sense of invulnerability and narrative of being beyond dependency". While such interpretations are not necessarily invalid or incorrect, I am critical of the dominance and complacency of these approaches. As I argue throughout this thesis, there is value in hearing the voices and experiences of those who care about the nonhuman – particularly given the global environmental catastrophes facing the planet. In its validation of the different meanings associated with Tasmanian forests, social constructionism informs the values of this research.

Theoretical framework: Interpretivism

> [A theoretical framework is the] philosophical stance that lies behind our chosen methodology. We attempt to explain how it provides context for the process and grounds its logic and criteria … [it] is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it.
>
> Crotty (1998: 7-8)

Interpretivist approaches are an expected fit with constructionist epistemologies, as an interpretivist framework "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty 1998: 67). Within sociology there has been something of an interpretive turn (Schwandt 2015: 168), with social researchers increasingly choosing approaches that emphasise the interpretations and motivations of individual social actors. However, interpretivism has been criticised for its close focus on the individualism of meaning-making to the detriment of identifying underlying structural factors that influence intersubjective meaning, as well for "retain[ing] a subject-object dichotomy" (Schwandt 2015: 168); perhaps unsurprisingly, Schwandt identifies Giddens as a critic of interpretivism. These criticisms highlight the importance of recognising the role of structural and cultural factors in shaping individual meaning-making.

Symbolic interactionism informs the formal theoretical framework of this research. Social constructionist epistemologies lend themselves to interpretivist approaches such as symbolic interactionism, where the emphasis is on understanding "how social actors recognize, produce, and reproduce social actions and how they come to share an intersubjective understanding of specific life circumstances" (Schwandt 2015: 37). I am concerned with the symbolic meanings

attributed by participants to Tasmanian forests, and the ways that these symbolic meanings inform lived experience. In designing this project, however, I have also been interested in the question of how people care about the nonhuman – that is, how does the experience of caring about Tasmanian forests feel? In exploring this aspect of the inquiry, I have taken inspiration from phenomenology's focus on experience, perception, intentionality, and the immediacy of 'being' in the world.

Symbolic interactionism

> If [people] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.
>
> Thomas and Thomas (1928: 572)

This classic insight from Thomas and Thomas articulates a basic tenet of symbolic interactionism: symbols may be not 'real' in a strict ontological sense, but symbols do have observable, impactful consequences for social life. It is this 'realness' that makes symbols sociologically significant. This project is concerned with exploring 'Tasmanian forests' as a meaningful symbol. Certainly, 'forest' means many different things in Tasmania – meanings that can have profound effects upon both human and nonhuman lives and futures. As Krien (2012: 146) frankly describes:

> The man moseying around in front of me looks at a 300-year-old tree and sees a nursing home [a forest past its prime], while an activist twenty minutes down the road sees a block of flats for furry and feathered creatures.

Specifically, this study explores the ways that Tasmanians understand and experience Tasmanian forests as symbolic of the six processes that reflect and sustain a sense of ontological security (the focal point of the previous chapter). Through Ezzy's (2014) theory of symbols – which draws on Latour's actor-network theory – I extend conventional symbolic interactionist understandings of symbols, which are largely cognitive in their emphasis. There are two 'avenues' through which I explore this: the symbol (Tasmanian forests) as a site of interpretation, and the symbol as a site of interaction. Discussing religious symbols, Ezzy (2014: 2-3) argues that "materialist and relational theories of [symbols] can be combined with, rather than opposed to, earlier interpretive and cultural theories … The significance of symbols is located in this middle ground, as they mediate between thought and action, as well as between interpretative meaning and relational practice". Such an approach to symbols is also compatible with the dismantling of culture-materiality dualisms (as discussed above). As Ezzy (2014: 3) further explains:

> For moderns, materiality is real, but meaningless, and symbols are meaningful, but not real. This modernist understanding of symbols, signs and semiological process is framed by dualist ontology in which matter and meaning, humans and nature, spirit and flesh, are separate orders. Such a dualistic ontology results in an impoverished conception of symbols.

The distinction between interpretation and interaction in this thesis is therefore a 'double-sided' approach to understanding symbols.

'The symbol as site of interpretation' refers to a classic approach to symbolic analysis: symbols as objects that 'stand in' to refer to attributed meanings (particularly collectively constructed

and recognised meanings). Blumer's (1969: 2) 'three tenets' of interactionism offer a common model of this approach:

- "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them";
- "the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows"; and
- "these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters".

In the context of this project, I understand these tenets as referring to the process whereby Tasmanians encounter the state's forests as meaningful objects – symbolic representations of collective understandings, which are then 're-experienced' through interaction with the forests. Blumer's wording is quite anthropocentric, and in this context it is helpful to consider the forest as one's nonhuman 'fellow' (to paraphrase the second tenet). There is precedence for using interactionist approaches to understand human-nonhuman engagements, with one example being Hannigan's (2010) 'emergence model'. Hannigan's (2010: 166) preoccupation with vulnerability and contingency makes his approach particularly relevant to this inquiry:

> Standard to most interactionist explanations is the idea that the social situations in which we found ourselves are both recurrent and predictable … But what happens when we enter into a situation in which there are no firm normative and definitional guideposts or those that exist are ambiguous or contradictory?

In answering this question, Hannigan suggests that the experience of uncertainty fosters reactions of improvisation, collaboration, and compromise (and a fair measure of these strategies is found in the actions of those who are concerned about environmental problems,

including conservation activists). In both Hannigan's model and classic interactionist writings is the implication that the symbol is important – in this case, the forest is never 'just trees'. Rather, the forest acts as a site of significant meaning, that humans interpret and incorporate into their lives in a multitude of ways.

Of vital importance in interactionist approaches is the "the putting of oneself in the place of the other … when the [interactionist] sociologist refers to meaning, it is to the subjective meaning actors impute to their action" (Crotty 1998: 75). This necessitates a methodological approach which gives 'voice' to individual's meanings: "Only through dialogue can one become aware of the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of others and interpret their meanings and intent" (Crotty 1998: 75-76). By allowing for the consideration of marginalised approaches to the nonhuman (such as non-Western ontologies, or emotional responses), the symbolic interactionist approach privileges more nuanced understandings and (e)valuations of the forest than those that consider the nonhuman solely from positivistic, scientific, and or economic perspectives. Symbolic interactionism is at times dismissed as uncritical (Crotty 1998); therefore, as when engaging with constructionist epistemologies, the researcher must consider how certain meanings are privileged in a given society and/or "leavened by structures of power and control" (Hannigan 2010: 176). Certain meanings may also be privileged by the researcher themselves, demanding an added dimension of reflexivity.

This approach – symbols as sites of interpretation – leans towards cognitive explanations of human engagement with symbolic meaning. It is an influential approach (both broadly and in this study) and has tended to be emphasised in literature exploring symbols (Ezzy 2014). In

this study, however, I also consider the symbol a site of interaction. I employ the term 'interaction' consciously as it implies both 'experience' (of being with/in the forest) and 'relationship' (with the forest, and that which it signifies). In this sense, Tasmanian forests are not simply objects that humans observe and interpret from the outside, but are meaningful subjects with which humans engage. This relationship is by no means devoid of cognitive reasoning, nor does it contradict the 'interpretation' approach outlined above. Rather, my point here is that Tasmanian forests, like all symbols, have the ability to "draw people into moral obligations and ethical practices because they draw people into relationships" (Ezzy 2014: 2). This is not necessarily an empathetic or environmentalist relationship, as those who interact with forests on purely instrumental terms are also engaging in 'obligations and practices' of an ethical nature. Rather, "[s]ymbols can draw participants into networks of domination and submission, or into networks of respect, trust and authenticity" (Ezzy 2014: 15). In this way, the understanding of symbols described by Ezzy draws on a Levinasian understanding of ethical response (Ezzy 2004) and is also compatible with relational approaches to sociological analysis (as discussed in Chapter 1).

Tasmanian forests act as a symbol which brings humans into contact with that which is not themselves. Individuals experience this contact in multiple ways. Ezzy's (2014: 5) analysis focuses upon religious symbols, but his argument that "[s]ymbols are significant emotionally and aesthetically, as they are performatively and ritually experienced … articulat[ing] a sensuous, emotionally rewarding, morally significant, relational engagement with self, others and the world" holds true for forests as well. Clearly, not every Tasmanian who interacts with the state's forests feels this process – but many do. The multitude of ways that Tasmanians

experience Tasmanian forests as symbolic of that which implicates ontological security is at the theoretical core of this project.

Phenomenology

When I first began this research, I strived (despite my distinct lack of disciplinary experience) to understand phenomenology. The vagueness and philosophical grounding of many descriptions baffled me; as Smith (2013) explains, phenomenology is "the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view … [and is both] a disciplinary field in philosophy, [and] a movement in the history of philosophy". The application of phenomenology to social research eluded me. Yet in time I found myself returning to phenomenology, and it has served as peripheral inspiration in the development of my theoretical knowledge, reminding me of the type of qualitative research I have strived to conduct. While (particularly realist-inclined) environmental sociologists rarely engage with phenomenological approaches, phenomenology can work to further illuminate the complex nature of 'reality' in relation to environmental issues, problems, and experiences (Williams 2016).

There is a large body of literature exploring what Wylie (2013: 61) calls "landscape phenomenologies". While symbolic interactionism is the primary paradigm of this study, there was an embodied 'immediacy' to participants' forest experiences that echoes many phenomenological inquiries. Phenomenological concepts such as perception, experience, immediacy, and intentionality resonate with participants' recollections (as communicated with me in the interview setting); further, as intentionality "allows us to [not be] overwhelmed by

the cacophonous multitude of personal experiences" (Williams 2016: 183), it has clear echoes of the experience of ontological security. My understanding of phenomenology draws primarily from Americanised accounts, which often "reflect a subjectivist, existentialist, and noncritical emphasis … [aiming] to identify and describe the subjective experiences of respondents" (Schwandt 2015: 234-235; see also Crotty 1998). While I do not wish to ignore the uncritical nature of this 'new-school' phenomenology, it does facilitate my light engagement with the framework as a way of prioritising individual's (relational, embodied, sometimes inarticulable) experiences with a methodologically significant subject/object (Tasmanian forests).

Participants' experiences with/in forests are an essential aspect of this research, and are part of what distinguishes this inquiry from the realist, value-based analyses of human-nonhuman interactions that characterise much environmental sociology. This approach also distinguishes this thesis from scientific, technological, and economic-based accounts of Tasmanian forests. Writing about nonhuman agency, Cianchi (2015: 36-37) argues there is:

> … a dissonance between how natural science describes the world and lived experience … Put simply, scientific knowledge demands that the world be an object of inquiry (conceptualisation) in which the observer is removed from the world, but the knowledge derived from lived experience is gained by being in the world (perception).

My fledgling understanding of phenomenology is therefore part of what prompted me to broach themes of action, perception, and embodiment with participants (as I will discuss further in the remainder of this chapter). This approach also encouraged me to broaden my

understanding beyond cognitive interpretations of the forest as a symbol. As with the concept of 'symbol as interaction', the phenomenological principle of 'intentionality' has also prompted me to think about human-nonhuman interactions as interrelationships. Intentionality "brings to the fore [the] interaction between subject and object. The image evoked is that of humans engaging with their human world. It is in and out of this interplay that meaning is born" (Crotty 1998: 45; see also Schwandt 2015: 164-165). While I certainly cannot claim expertise in the application of phenomenology to sociological research, these ideas have informed various aspects of this inquiry.

Methodology

> [Research methodology is] our strategy or plan of action. This is the research design that shapes our choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes.
>
> Crotty (1998: 7)

Given the points discussed thus far in this chapter, this research project is qualitative in nature and does not aim to create generalisable results. Guba and Lincoln (1994, in Bryman 2016: 384) propose "[a]lternative criteria for evaluating qualitative research", with 'transferability' being the criterion analogous to generalisability. Transferability refers to the use of in-depth description and critical insight to communicate findings from one social context that can 'transfer' to other, similar situations. While this inquiry is a case study of a particular social context (Tasmania), the transferability of 'ontological security' to other studies and sites of human-nonhuman interaction is an equally important contribution of this research.

There are various approaches and definitions of what precisely constitutes a sociological methodology. The lines between methodology, theoretical perspective, and research method are often unclear; as such, I have been consciously liberal in my interpretation of Crotty's description above. My methodological strategy comprises the four research concerns that I have kept in mind while designing and conducting this study: the Tasmanian research context; my adopted sampling strategy; my standpoint as a researcher; and the role of language in this thesis. Crotty (1998: 216) pithily warns against "pluck[ing] a research paradigm off the shelf"; as such, the methodology illustrated here is my targeted 'plan of action'. These are the aspects of research design that I have chosen to emphasise to best reflect the project's epistemological and theoretical underpinnings, and to best answer my research questions.

Tasmania

The historical, geographical, cultural, and political factors detailed in Chapter 1 underscore the fascination and challenges that Tasmania presents as a context in which to study human-forest interactions. Forestry conflicts have been a significant and persistent social issue for the state, to which I have aimed to contribute new perspectives; compatible with this is the usefulness of case studies in producing "context-dependent knowledge" (Flyvbjerg 2006: 221). Tasmania also makes for a compelling site to explore human-forest experiences and connections. Tasmanian forests are socially salient, accessible, and unique, and the pride and sense of identity linked to these places juxtaposes with a social context that threatens the forests' existence. In these ways, the Tasmanian context has made my project the qualitative, micro-sociological project that it is.

There are also personal elements of my rationale in choosing a Tasmanian case study. I live in Hobart, which simplified the logistical matters of most interviews. I am also familiar with local dynamics and conversations regarding forestry in the state. Beyond these practicalities, the simple justification is that Tasmania is my home. As Milstein (2012: 166) points out, while "some argue that articulating scholarship as advocacy might not be especially effective or appropriate … others choose research sites and approaches that ensure they are not merely observers but also advocates in their case studies". This has certainly been the case for me and this project.

While in part this inquiry is specifically about Tasmania, 'theory-testing' ontological security as an environmental sociological framework is an essential component of the research. Flyvbjerg (2006: 229) argues that case studies are "useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses". Further, the use of a relevant, unusual, and/or notable case study can provide the in-depth analysis needed to undermine assumptions about social phenomena (the 'all swans are white' proposition) and illuminate the actors and processes behind social problems (Flyvbjerg 2006). While some may criticise case studies as facilitating confirmation bias, this criticism also applies to other forms of research (Flyvbjerg 2006), including those in which the researcher lacks adequate practices of reflexivity. Condensing complex, abstract, and ambiguous phenomena is not always possible, nor desirable; case studies are concerned with depth (rather than breadth), making a sample of 27 Tasmanians appropriate for my exploration of ontological security.

By global standards, Tasmania is also a relatively small and close-knit community. As Krien (2012: 187-189) describes, in Tasmania:

> Forestry has to do with absolutely everything … [and the] key players all seem more closely connected on the island; whereas on the mainland [of Australia] you might have to decipher seven or eight handshakes to get to the guts of a deal, here there may be only one or two. Far from making it easier to get to the bottom of things, this closeness makes things harder to untangle.

There is an anecdotal truth to this. It is a common joke that there are two degrees of separation between all Tasmanians, and the publicness of the state's environmental politics compounds this closeness. This has presented me with some challenges, but also some advantages; for example, I enjoyed a swift recruitment of participants, which I suspect was due to the close-knit networks of relationships in Tasmania. In a few instances I was aware of a participant's public profile before I spoke with them – a coincidence I had not sought out (as I was interested primarily in participants' personal, 'off-the-record' experiences). This echoes Krien's assessment of Tasmania – it is easy to talk to people intimately involved with various aspects of the state's forest politics.

The politicised nature of forests in Tasmania presented some complexities. While the political context of Tasmanian forests unsurprisingly informed the responses of each participant, most participants embraced lines of questioning that focused on their own emotional and experiential responses to forests. However – as I discuss in further depth below – several participants appeared to arrive at the interviews prepared with 'big-picture' political agendas

that they wished to discuss. To prompt these participants to speak about their forest experiences and memories was sometimes difficult, and my success was varied. At times, participants made (direct and indirect) references to other participants, or groups that other participants were a part of (unknowingly, given the anonymity of all participants). The politicisation of this research topic also presented issues in terms of sampling and representation, as the following section will detail.

Sampling

Designing the sampling strategy of this project was one of the first major challenges that I faced. As I have discussed, there is public and political fixation in Tasmania on the idea of 'sides'; as such, the early stages of this project were marked by the vexing issue of how to fairly represent potential stakeholders. Should I speak to a group of loggers and a group of conservationists? Could I recruit on the basis of political affiliation? My living in Tasmania contributed to this fabricated conundrum; 'jobs versus the environment' is a dichotomy with which those living in the state are intimately familiar (Krien 2012: 188). I had heard anecdotally that I would likely face difficulties finding loggers and industry representatives to speak to, but worried that my research would be invalid if I did not do so.

I describe this problem as 'fabricated' because, in hindsight, it was my own insularity and insecurity largely driving the perceived issue. As I began to think more carefully about the Tasmanian case study, it occurred to me that this very assumption of 'sides' and 'fair representation' was likely a key element of the persistence and vitriol of the state's forestry conflicts. If I wanted my research to contribute new perspectives to this issue – and to

contribute deeper understandings of ontological security and human-forest engagements – I needed to start thinking about underrepresented voices, experiences, and themes. In my efforts to create an 'unbiased' sample from across 'both sides', I may have instead missed the fascinating stories that individuals could tell me – stories of personal, emotional, embodied, and existential experiences – by recruiting on the assumption of 'sided' identity.

As such, I primarily utilised a self-selection sampling strategy (Tranter 2013). Participants responded to a recruitment poster, featuring the tagline 'Are you interested in Tasmania's forests?' (see Appendix Three). Participants needed to be over 18 years of age, a Tasmanian resident, and self-identify as being 'interested in forests and forest issues'. While self-selection does hold a high risk of sample bias, the diversity of passionate voices that this sampling strategy encourages held strong appeal for this project (Tranter 2013). I sent the recruitment poster (along with a short description of myself and the research) to various Tasmanian organisations, such as the Environmental Defenders Office, Wilderness Society, Environment Tasmania, Forestry Tasmania, and the People and Environment Cross-Disciplinary Postgraduate Society (based at the University of Tasmania). This was a successful strategy, resulting in a high rate of recruitment. Some participants alternatively contacted me after hearing about the project from someone they knew, including two participants who became involved following a referral from another participant (known as 'snowball' sampling [Tranter 2013]). For practicality (and in an effort to reach those most interested in forest issues), the organisations I targeted were quite 'green-leaning'; I acknowledge that a broader advertising strategy could have potentially produced a rather less conservationist-minded sample. I did attempt to contact Forestry Tasmania but unfortunately, they did not respond to my email.

Describing phenomenological research methods, Hycner (1999: 156) argues that "the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants". As such – and considering this study's aim to contribute new perspectives and voices – this sampling strategy was a strength of the research. Several comments that I received as I began conducting fieldwork confirmed this. I had people ask me variations of "are you talking to both sides?" and "are you talking to equal numbers of people?", illustrating the ubiquity of this perception of 'sides'. A couple of participants expressed similar concerns. Gordon, for example, discussed how I could undertake contacting ex-forestry workers, while Reg said:

> Now, uh, in terms of… rampant… have you interviewed [a pro-logging figure] yet? … If you want a balanced perspective on it, he's a very angry… [laughs]. He… if you want a balanced perspective, I suppose talk to him.

To understand Tasmania's forestry conflicts, it is necessary to engage with this polarisation. I do not suggest that there is no element of reality to this dichotomous framing; there are certainly elements of 'pro' and 'anti'-forestry identities and positions that permeate Tasmanians' livelihoods and concerns. Recognising ambivalence and complexity, however, is a form of challenging those dominant conversations and voices that saturate the state's forest politics, and thus impact upon Tasmania's forests themselves. The sampling strategy that I have employed was an early and very significant measure I could take to meet this challenge. This sampling strategy resulted in a sample of 27 Tasmanians from across the state. Table 3 below summarises the basic details of each participant, listed by pseudonym.

Name	Identity	Estimated age	Location
Priscilla	Forest enthusiast, mother	40-60	South
Henry	Bushwalker	60+	South
Ken	Painter	60+	South
Jack	Walking guide	40-60	South
Helen	Birdlife enthusiast	<40	South
George	Bushwalker	60+	North
Leon	Student	60+	South
Daniel	Boat-builder	40-60	South
Catherine	Environmental activist	40-60	South
Claire	Bushwalker, student	<40	South
Jane	Painter, former tourism worker	60+	South
Lara	Photographer	60+	South
Marie	Horticulturist, bushwalker	40-60	South
Alan	Retired forestry researcher	60+	South
Don	Bushwalker, bird-watcher	60+	North
Ben	Furniture designer, bushwalker	40-60	South
Amelia	Student	<40	South
Zoe	Animal carer, mother	<40	South
Gordon	Farmer	60+	South
Diane	Teacher, bushwalker	60+	South
James	Botanical surveyor, bushwalker	60+	North
Reg	Journalist	60+	South
Matthew	Environmental activist	40-60	South
Lee	Forest enthusiast, international student	<40	South
Peter	Sawmiller, forest enthusiast	60+	North
Nick	Environmental activist	40-60	South
Hugh	Bushwalker, environmental activist	60+	South

Table 3. Participants: characteristics and location

This table highlights that the participants of this study do not represent a typical cross section of Tasmanians in terms of their relatively high cultural capital; participants tended to be older, 'middle-class', and exhibit interest in political, educational, leisurely, and/or creative pursuits. It is clear throughout participants' responses that these characteristics shape their individual

experiences of ontological security; these characteristics do not, however, dictate or determine these experiences. The 'Identity' column lists the main elements of each participants' ecocultural identity, as I perceived participants to have emphasised during the interview. These identifying labels are necessarily brief, intended only to give a sense of each participants' experiences. Doubtless there are many other elements of each participants' identity and group memberships, but those listed seemed to me the most salient lenses through which each participant encountered Tasmanian forests, at the time of the interview. I further explore the interview process in the following sections of this chapter.

Standpoint

My ethical and emotional standpoint as a researcher has also had a significant influence upon the design of this inquiry. This project has always been about Tasmania, even in its earliest forms; when I first considered pursuing a doctorate, I felt that it should be about human-nonhuman interactions in the state. The conceptual framework of ontological security took shape as I realised that it explained much of my own reactions and relations to Tasmanian forests. The reading, critique, and operationalisation described in Chapter 2 allowed me to then move beyond my own frame of reference, to consider how ontological security might 'work' for other people. It is clear, however, that my own standpoint has shaped this inquiry significantly.

Several elements of my ecocultural identity, however, differ from those of many of the participants of this study. I do not belong to any environmental organisations, I bushwalk only occasionally, and I am not an environmental activist. I am younger than many participants, and

so have not experienced first-hand much of the political history recounted in Chapter 1. As a surface-level statement, however, I am in favour of the conservation of Tasmanian forests. The extractive, economic, and political practices of Forestry Tasmania (and past and present State and Federal Governments) deeply concern me, and learning more about the political history of my home state has strengthened my convictions regarding the protection of Tasmania's forests. I do not feel that I am able to definitively state what this 'protection' should entail; like many participants, I believe there is space for some small-scale, sustainable industry in Tasmania. However, I cannot abide Tasmania's environmental track record, nor do I support the ongoing marginalisation of emotional, ethical, embodied, and non-industrial approaches to the nonhuman. That the planet is facing unprecedented issues of anthropogenic climate change, pollution, consumption, and human-induced extinction rates only confirms my beliefs.

In December 2015, I wrote in my research journal a simple, telling question: "Am I allowed to try and promote environmental conservation?" It fascinates (and concerns) me that in the contemporary environmental climate, being 'pro-environment' can still feel like a radical position to take. For me, part of this feeling likely stemmed from the insecurity described above in relation to sampling strategies. In Tasmania – "a place … where a 2000-year-old protected tree is axed, drilled and filled with diesel, before being spray-painted with the words 'Fuck You Greenie Cunts' and set alight" (Krien 2012: 10) – there is often a push-back against conservationists and the (perceived) like. I have feared that because of this, many in Tasmania may not take my research seriously. Further, there is an academic value placed upon 'objective' and 'rational' social research, as I suggested in the previous chapter. Yet, as Sayer (2011: 7) argues:

> Sometimes the only way we can adequately describe social phenomena is through evaluative descriptions: to describe actions as 'compassionate', 'abusive' or 'racist' is also to evaluate them. It may not be possible to find value-free terms for those actions without turning the descriptions into misdescriptions; the scene of the bombed-out village might be described as 'collateral damage', but that would also fail to describe the enormity of what happened. Values and objectivity need not be inversely related. For many social scientists, assessing well-being is a step too far, a dangerous importation of the researcher's own values. But well-being and ill-being are indeed states of being, not merely subjective value-judgements … The very assumption that judgements of value and objectivity don't mix - an assumption that is sometimes built into the definition of 'objectivity' - is a misconception.

My standpoint as a researcher is a strength of this study's methodology. To argue for critical evaluation and change of the variable under examination is a hallmark of social constructionist research (Schwandt 2015: 37). Further, personal embeddedness in a research context can be an advantage; Flyvbjerg (2006: 236) suggests the possibility that "the most advanced form of understanding is achieved when researchers place themselves within the context being studied". My standpoint has encouraged me to seek out participants who inhabit similarly ambivalent and emotional positions as myself – to look past the discourse of 'sides' and hear the voices of those who are 'in between', 'a bit of both', or simply have not labelled themselves in these forestry conflicts.

Finally, ultimately, this inquiry is not about Tasmanian forestry. I do not answer the question of whether Tasmania should continue, change, or cease its current logging practices. This study is about the potential connections between ontological security and human-forest interactions, and the experiences of those Tasmanians invested in these areas and issues. It fascinates me that forests can elicit feelings of awe, wonder, anger, and grief, and that forests can exist 'outside of themselves', in the sense that they have an ongoing presence in some humans' lives (long after a person has left the forest in question). My personal standpoint as a researcher simply helps me to pursue these questions that I have.

Language

The fourth and final of this study's methodological concerns relates to language and articulation. Part of this is the defining of key terms. As Chapter 2 detailed, the conceptualisation and operationalisation of 'ontological security' is a crucial aspect of this project. Without this, I would have no effective language through which to understand and express my research aims and questions, nor participants' experiences of ontological security. Another key term that required careful consideration was 'Tasmanian forests'. During the early stages of this project I developed a definition of Tasmanian forests by drawing on the Forest Practices Authority. It read:

> In the context of this study, 'Tasmanian forests' refers to the state's native forests (non-plantation forests), including wet eucalypt, dry eucalypt, sub-alpine eucalypt, and non-eucalypt (including rainforest) forests (as per the Forest Practices Authority's (2012) State of the Forests Tasmania report). Of the approximately 50% of the state that is forested, native forest comprises

> approximately 90%; as of 2012 half of this native forest is in state reserves (Forest Practices Authority 2012).

[From an early literature review draft]

This definition largely drew, again, from my concerns about being a 'serious' researcher. By no means do clear and factual definitions lack value, and I have drawn upon elements of this definition in establishing the context of this study in Chapter 1. However, this rather dry definition does little to speak to the aims and questions of this research, nor the study's epistemological and theoretical underpinnings. As such, I decided to defer to participants' definitions of 'Tasmanian forests'. During our interview, Henry said:

> I guess, from your point of view, you're going to have to regard what other people think is forests and allow them to believe that they are forests. [laughs] Because otherwise, there aren't that many tightly defined forests in Tasmania.

Here, Henry has summarised this thesis' approach to defining 'Tasmanian forests'. I discuss this issue further in Chapter 4 by presenting the multifaceted definitions of forests described by participants. Deferring to participants' definitions of the sites in question was one way for me to prioritise participants' voices; this desire also inspired my decision to ask participants to submit materials that they felt represented Tasmanian forests, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

The second dimension of language and articulation relevant to this study concerns the acknowledgement of the unspoken. It is not always easy or possible to articulate engagement

with the nonhuman – perhaps especially so in Western cultural settings, as Milstein (2008) argues. Those who feel an emotional or empathetic connection with the nonhuman may hesitate to express it, due to their fear of others' negative perceptions (a fear that supports Milstein's argument) (Nicholsen 2002; Cianchi 2015). Sometimes, faced with the nonhuman, words simply are 'not enough' or 'get in the way' (Milstein 2008). There is also the question of the forest's 'voice': do understandings of nonhuman agency suggest that there are 'words' that the forest could 'speak'? Perhaps the articulation of all experiences is not necessary, and perhaps sometimes there is power in silence. To provide 'space' for (verbal and nonverbal) expression and representation, however, is a key methodological concern of this inquiry. At the end of our interview, Marie said:

> It's been really great to be able to articulate some of those thoughts, and perhaps put them into words. Because a lot of these thoughts or feelings, these values we might hold, perhaps are unarticulated to a degree, and we wonder why they are dear to us, those things. So it's been great to have an opportunity to be able to articulate that.

In this way, Marie spoke to the unspeakable, identifying the process that this thesis illustrates. This chapter has thus far outlined the key epistemological, theoretical, and methodological approaches that make such research aims possible. The remainder of the chapter explores the methods through which I have pursued these aims.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews and participant submissions

> [Research methods are] the concrete techniques or procedures we plan to use. There will be certain activities we engage in so as to gather and analyse our data. These activities are our research methods.
>
> Crotty (1998: 6)

In shifting from research design to research conduct, the first consideration is one of ethics. Obtaining ethical approval from the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee was an administrative requirement of this research project, and I attained this approval in fulfilling the requirements for a low-risk ethics application (Habibis 2013). In accordance with this application, I have ensured to the best of my ability the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants. All names used are pseudonyms, and I have redacted some identifying information (particularly given the close-knit research context of Tasmania). I provided all participants with an information sheet prior to interviews taking place and obtained signed consent forms from every participant (see Appendix Four). The ethical dimension of this project has not simply been an administrative requirement, however; as such, I have also utilised the "most important mechanism to ensure ethical research … the researcher's own sense of integrity" (Habibis 2013: 74). To this end, I have endeavoured to represent participants' responses as accurately, fairly, and respectfully as possible. Further, where participants contributed materials as part of the 'second phase' of data collection, I chose not to attach participants' original pseudonyms due to my concerns about anonymity. I explain this decision in further detail below.

I conducted 27 semi-structured interviews with participants between October 2016 and February 2017. These interviews constituted the primary source of data collection for this project. I recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed these interviews. I also invited participants to submit materials – visual, written, or otherwise – that they felt represented 'Tasmanian forests'. Eleven participants contributed to this part of project. The remainder of this chapter will describe these two forms of data collection, and explain the rationale behind the collection, organisation, and analysis of these data.

Interviews

Given the considerations described thus far – a constructionist epistemology, a framework of interpretivism, and a set of methodological concerns oriented around individual stories – I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews as my main source of data collection. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for answering 'how' questions (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015), such as those queries concerned with the intricate methods behind complex social processes (as in the research questions of this inquiry). Interviews speak to the epistemological position and theoretical framework of this research in a much more coherent way than research methods such as questionnaires or surveys do (Travers 2013). As per the adopted sampling strategy, I was looking to speak to different people, with different group memberships and motivations; as such, interviews presented a more reasonable means of exploring ontological security across this diverse sample than a method such as ethnographic observation could.

The rationale for conducting semi-structured interviews with an interview guide centred mostly on concerns about language and articulation. The most important aspect of the

interviews was the ability to 'access' participants' potential experiences of ontological security. Yet – as Chapter 2 explored – ontological security is a non-conscious, abstract, often unarticulated process. The use of an annotated interview guide (Appendix Five) allowed me to carefully consider the operationalised components of ontological security, and thus facilitate relevant conversations with participants. The interview guide also gave me clarity during the interview process, particularly in conversations that could have been side-tracked by discussion of politics and current affairs. For example, I conducted my interview with Zoe the day of Donald Trump's election; having the interview guide to defer to kept this conversation on track, considering both Zoe and I were keenly following the news. Conducting semi-structured interviews also helped me to broach subjects which might not have seemed immediately relevant to participants (such as their 'forest routines'). In a sense, the interviews were a performative process of participants and I negotiating the language of ontological security as it relates to human-forest interactions.

I consciously aimed to avoid 'procedural' and (supposedly) 'objective' approaches to the interview process, which see the interview as "an event that is isolated from cultural and situational norms and frameworks of meaning" (Schwandt 2015: 170). Instead, I aimed for what Schwandt (2015: 170) describes as an "alternative model or logic", which views the research interview as:

> a particular kind of discursive, narrative, or linguistic event or practice unfolding in a specific sociopolitical context. In this event, interviewer and respondent are regarded as agents active in the coconstruction of the content of the interview … What transpires in the interview is the dynamic,

> purposeful shaping of stories and experiences on the part of the interviewee … the interviewer's behavior is not considered in terms of contamination or bias; rather, that behavior is unavoidably part of the communicative event in which the interviewee's meaning is assembled in its narration.

Reflecting this, an exchange I had with Henry – in which I aimed to match his friendliness with an informality of my own – summarises my approach to the interview guide:

> H: So do you have a standard sort of list of questions?
>
> I: Yeah, I've got my guide here. I'll refer to that, but we'll maybe try and treat it as a bit of a conversation as well. Don't feel like you're being drilled on specific things for specific answers. It's more a 'your experiences' kind of thing.

However, in the interests of exploring a common experience in ontological security, there were a few questions that I tended to ask almost all participants. The most common were a variation of 'what brought you here?', to establish a basic understanding of each participants' experience and motivation; 'what do Tasmanian forests mean to you?', eliciting some form of definition from each participant; what participants do in forests, including memorable past experiences; and participants' thoughts about Tasmanian forestry and forest conservation. Other common themes were the emotions associated with forests; the Tasmanian places (and aspects of Tasmania) that participants particularly valued; general environmental concerns; and the routines and rituals that participants associated with Tasmanian forests. Despite these

consistencies, the structure and content of the 27 interviews varied widely, taking into account each participants' experiences, memories, concerns, opinions, and knowledge.

Most interviews lasted approximately an hour. Twenty-four interviews took place in person – usually on the University of Tasmania's Sandy Bay campus, or in Hobart cafes – with three interviews taking place over phone or Skype (George, Peter, and Don). Four participants were from the north of the state; all others were from Hobart or surrounds. While the participant sample skewed heavily to those living in Tasmania's South, I do not feel that this meaningfully affected the interview findings. Regardless of location, participants tended to speak about the same forest experiences, environmental concerns, and political issues and figures. As shown in Table 3 above, the sample was also quite homogenous in terms of age. This is likely reflected in several codes that emerged from the data (such as embodied experiences of aging and holding concerns for grandchildren). I address these issues in Chapter 7; however, as stated previously, this project is concerned with individual experiences, and does not aim for generalisability. Hugh was the final participant that I spoke with, over two months after the previous interview with Nick (due to the intervening Christmas period). Following this conversation with Hugh I felt confident that I had reached a saturation point, having conducted 90% of the original projection of 30 interviews.

I recorded each face-to-face interview using a mobile phone, which had the advantage of being a relatively inconspicuous recording device. Asking participants about their forest experiences and memories tended to yield vibrant conversation – sometimes to the point that interviews did not broach every element of the interview guide. Asking direct questions about

participants' opinions and emotions regarding forestry in Tasmania also tended to be an effective strategy, reflecting the significant position this topic holds in the state's public consciousness. Many participants were very generous with their descriptions of personal anecdotes and emotional experiences, for which I was extremely grateful. I noticed some elements of common language, clearly shaped by recent events and current discourse. Most salient of these were Donald Trump's election; issues surrounding salmon farming in Tasmania; the January 2016 bushfires that affected areas across the state; and the '400,000 hectares' issue (as mentioned in Chapter 1). I sensed that participants were using references to 'the 400,000 hectares' as a form of shorthand for broader current issues in Tasmanian forestry politics.

The interview process did present me with challenges. Primary of these was presentation; I felt some anxiety in how I presented myself to participants, as I did not want to give an impression (through my clothing, comments, or otherwise) of my own political and environmental leanings. I was concerned that to do so would give participants the idea that I was looking for certain answers, particularly as my core aim was for participants to feel comfortable enough to share their personal stories, memories, and concerns. This exchange with Amelia confirmed my approach:

> I: What interested you about the study to respond?
>
> A: Um… I don't know. I think it's, I think it's really important to protect the forests, obviously, it's a big drawcard for Tasmania. To be honest I'm not entirely sure which angle the study's coming from, so I can't give you a super great answer.

> I: … basically what I've been talking to people about in the interviews is just times, experiences you've had, memories you have, times you've been out - what you think about forests, and forestry, and conservation and stuff like that. So really … I just want your opinion, whatever it is. There's nothing you can say wrong.
>
> A: Okay, okay. Well I have, like, opinions both sides.

To this end, I dressed conservatively and did not wear any symbols (such as on jewellery), and carefully avoided verbalising my own views prior to each individual interview being well under way. That I was so concerned about this reflects the rhetoric of 'sides', as discussed in Chapter 1; my worry was that participants would pigeon-hole my views and identity, and respond accordingly. It was unavoidable that some participants would make assumptions about my own knowledge and background. Ken, for example, said:

> … you could whip a blindfold off someone having told them "you're in a forest, where is it?", and I reckon 10 seconds and you'd say "Oh, Australia." And it's like tasting wine – someone like yourself, you'd be able to say Northwest Coast, Tarkine, wherever, you'd be instantly able to identify a tree or two. Whereas mine would be more an emotive response.

Nonetheless, I believe I was successful in my approach. Participants very generously shared their experiences and concerns, and I felt there was a good sense of rapport and respect in each interview space.

A further challenge of the interviews was that several participants seemed less inclined to share personal stories, and their focus on politics and silviculture was difficult to reconcile with my research aims. These participants – Daniel, Reg, Alan, and Gordon – seemed to me to have more preconceived ideas regarding the interview content than other participants did. They had topics that seemed most important to them to discuss; Daniel, for example, was concerned about the access and use of specialty timbers, and Gordon was very critical of the management of Forestry Tasmania. These participants' insights are valuable, and deeply reflect the politicisation of forests and forestry in Tasmania; naturally, however, I was also concerned with investigating the research themes most salient to my study. It was difficult at times to shift these conversations towards these participants' personal experiences and concerns, and I was perhaps less successful in this tactic with Alan and Gordon than was ideal. I also suspect, however, that ontological security is a less appropriate framework for understanding Alan and Gordon's experiences than it is for the other participants. I return to this point in Chapter 7. Following the insights of performative theories of gender (as championed by the work of Judith Butler [1990]), it is worth noting that as these four participants are men, their hesitation perhaps reflects a socially-constructed masculine disinclination to express emotions in a relatively public space.

Finally, I did find it taxing to conduct 26 interviews within nine weeks. Ideally, I would have preferred to have more time to reflect upon each interview before conducting the next. My recruitment strategy had been more successful than expected, however, and many potential participants contacted me in a very short time frame. The positive element of this small data

collection window was a sense of consistency; conducting the interviews quickly did facilitate a certain sense of uniformity amidst the flexible, semi-structured form of the interviews.

Thematic analysis

I transcribed and thematically analysed the interview data, mainly after the conclusion of all 27 interviews. I transcribed using the document processing software Scrivener. Transcribing was undoubtedly a long (and at time physically painful) process, but it was extremely useful as a first stage of analysis. Transcribing all interviews myself ensured that I became very familiar with the data. I kept research notes during the transcribing process to record the patterns and connections that I noticed between participants' responses, and felt very prepared when it came time to formally code and analyse the transcript data. Transcription ultimately granted me the opportunity to "gain embodied ownership of the data" (Saldaña and Omasta 2018: 115).

To describe transcription as a 'first stage of analysis' also has methodological implications, particularly in terms of approaching transcription as a researcher's interpretation of the recorded data (Lapadat & Lindsay 1999; Bird 2005). For the most part I transcribed the voice recordings verbatim, as per my respect for the individual's experiences and expression. However, transcribing does involve making decisions which balance efficiency, practicality, and the desire to capture participants' 'voices'. I occasionally skipped transcribing long tangents (particularly when these tangents seemed to reflect the participant's assumption that we would primarily discuss political processes); this is consistent with Bloom's (1993, in Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999: 69) argument that transcribing requires a balance between practicality and the

need to 'reduce' data, whilst retaining the ability for multiple, in-depth interpretations. Within the transcripts I made note of pauses, voice tone, and laughter, particularly when these things seemed to pertain to articulation – such as something seeming difficult for a participant to say, or when participants couched their comments in humour (see Bird 2005). I omitted some "verbal debris" (Saldaña and Omasta 2018: 118), but retained repetitions, tones, and asides (including emphasis or hesitance) that seemed to convey a participant's intention. Lee was not a native English speaker, which has probably limited the number of quotes I have included from her in the following chapters; the gist of her responses, however, informed many of the conclusions I have drawn from the interview data.

In exploring ontological security as a framework for environmental sociology, I was interested in the themes that consistently emerged across multiple participants' experiences. For this reason, and given the methodological underpinnings of this inquiry, thematic analysis was the most logical choice of method to analyse the transcripts. Following Willis' (2013) advice, my process of thematic analysis involved the keeping of research notes, coding, and the identification of themes, patterns, unexpected findings, and outlying data. To begin the process of coding, I listed every theme, topic, or keyword that I expected to emerge from the transcripts. I then reorganised this list to keep as a master guide. My method of coding involved printing the transcripts and perusing each document with a highlighter and pen, noting down expected, common, emergent, and altered codes as I went. I opted not to use a qualitative data analysis program such as NVIVO. Partly, this decision was based on the relatively small number of transcripts I had; further, as with transcribing, this manual process

of coding seemed to impart an embodied familiarity with the data. I followed Saldaña's (2009) advice to manually code first, before moving these codes into electronic form.

After the coding process, I iteratively reorganised and condensed the body of codes to best reflect the data's emergent themes. In Appendix Five I have included the original list of expected codes, alongside a table summarising the codes and themes that ultimately guided the early drafts of the following discussion chapters. A comparison between the original list of expected codes and the streamlined table keenly reflect the non-linear, creative processes that epitomise the enjoyment and value of qualitative research.

Participant submissions

While semi-structured interviews were my primary means of gathering data, the sometimes inarticulable nature of human-forest interactions led me to consider how supplementary data could offer a way for participants to nonverbally express their understandings and experiences of Tasmanian forests. Krien (2012: 118) argues that "Tasmania's forest battles are fought largely in the arena of images and semantics", and I am interested in visual representations of Tasmania (particularly given the saturation of imagery and amateur photography in contemporary Western society). Photography is far from the only way to 'capture' Tasmania, however; for example, I remember one conversation with my supervisor in which she mentioned that her representation of Tasmanian forests would be the smell of eucalyptus leaves. It became evident to me that a participant-led method of gathering data beyond the spoken word – as an acknowledgement of different (and equally valid) forms of knowledge

and experience – would be a valuable addition to this study's design (see also Atkinson 2015: 93-95). This also clearly speaks to this research's constructionist epistemology.

To this end, I invited participants to submit materials (visual or otherwise) that they felt represented Tasmanian forests. Eleven participants contributed materials, and the resulting analysis comprises a small but important component of this thesis. I initially planned to use these submissions to create a website (Rose 2012: 321-322). I may still realise this plan, but as themes of creativity and the 'ongoing-ness' of forest experiences emerged from the transcript data, I decided that these submissions had an important place in this thesis.

In developing this method of participant submissions, I drew inspiration from photo-elicitation interviewing (PEI). PEI involves using photographs – taken by the interviewer or interviewees, depending on the aims of the research – to assist and enhance the interviewing process (Harper 2002). I felt that using PEI would hinder rather than help my research for several reasons, including the highly politicised and historically situated nature of many visual representations of Tasmanian forests (potentially undermining my aim to access individual and personalised representations). By asking participants to submit their own materials after the interview, however, I have retained a number of PEI's advantages. Harper (2002: 20) explains that photographs "allow access to emotions or experiences that do not 'fit' easily into verbal descriptions, and are ideal for … those areas of research which have a distinctive visual character'". This suits the aims of this research. Further, photographs (and other texts) can "provide [participants] a unique way to communicate dimensions of their lives" (Clark-Ibáñez 2004: 1507). In asking participants to submit materials in a form that they chose, I have aimed

to prioritise the individuality of their experiences, giving participants the power to construct their response. This reflects PEI's ability to "[decenter] the authority of the author" (Harper 2002: 15). This method allowed me to explore the theme of 'representation', alongside participants' summaries of their impressions of Tasmanian forests, unrestricted by the lines of questioning encountered in the 'in-the-moment' interview setting. As such, this method has resulted in a kind of 'backwards' PEI, in which the interview experience – co-constructed by the participant and myself – has influenced the materials that participants have chosen to submit.

I invited participants to submit materials immediately following the conclusion of each interview. I provided participants with my email address for submission, and a copy of a flyer with the following prompt: "what represents 'Tasmanian forests' to you?" Appendix Three contains a copy of this flyer. Inviting participants to contribute non-visual materials was an important and successful component of this method, particularly as doing so prioritised participants' agency in shaping their response. Crucially, it also resulted in the submission of materials – that is, ways of experiencing and communicating Tasmanian forests – that I did not predict. This diversity is attributable to a few possible factors. Many participants seemed to embrace the study and trust me as a researcher, resulting in their being generous in their contributions to the research. My emphasis that materials could take any form seemed to encourage this generosity. As I will explore in greater depth in Chapter 6, the themes and topics discussed in interviews also seemed to influence the materials that participants chose to contribute. Table 4 below provides a brief overview of participants' submissions.

Material(s)	Number of items (from number of participants)	Description
Written responses	3 (from 3 participants)	Three extended written responses to the prompt, sent in the body of an email
Poem	1 (from 1 participant)	One poem, emailed as an attached document
Paintings	2 (from 1 participant)	Two scanned images of paintings
Story	1 (from 1 participant)	One story, emailed as an attached document
Song lyrics	1 (from 1 participant)	Lyrics to a song, emailed as an attached document
Dance routine	1 (from 1 participant)	A dance routine, emailed as an attached Word document
Photographs	40 (from 5 participants)	Forty photographs emailed as attached files, with thirty coming from one participant. Three participants included short descriptions of the images in the body of the email. One participant included an extended caption, detailing the meanings represented by their choice of image. The participant who submitted the set of thirty photographs included a document containing informational captions for each photograph.

Table 4. Materials submitted by participants as representing 'Tasmanian forests'

While I had initially hoped for a higher response rate, I only intended these submissions to be supplemental to the interview data. I could have perhaps boosted the response rate by mentioning the submissions process to participants from initial contact, and again at the start of the interview. However, the materials that participants contributed are richly detailed and provide plenty of scope for this exploration of representations of Tasmanian forests.

Each participant had a pseudonym attributed to their transcript data, used to identify their responses throughout this thesis. I have decided not to attach these same pseudonyms to the responses submitted by the eleven participants, nor specify whether the participant created the material themselves, or selected it from their own archives (the exception to this being the written responses, which are evidently participant-made). This is largely due to anonymity concerns, as the partnering of certain materials and transcript data provides an extra 'layer' of identification (particularly in such a close-knit research context as Tasmania). It was also a methodological choice. The materials submitted by participants represent a different form of knowledge and experience than the interview transcripts do, and as such it not necessary to consider these two forms of data in tandem (Rose 2012). Secondly, this part of the project is about representation, rather than the act of creation; I am interested in the ideas that participants chose to emphasise about Tasmanian forests, rather than their work in creating those representations. Rose (2012) suggests that theorists lack clear consensus on what a photograph 'does', in terms of 'capturing a moment'. As I am interested in representation, I have viewed the submitted materials as that which participants have chosen to compose and share; these materials are therefore organised depictions, rather an off-the-cuff capturing of 'real life'. The first half of Chapter 6 discusses the act of creation (in terms of building, design,

painting, writing, and photography); the latter sections of Chapter 6 present the analysis of the submissions.

Analysis of submitted materials

Having gathered the submitted materials, analysis of this data proved a new and exciting research challenge. Analysis of non-transcript data is not an area I have prior experience in, and I found it difficult to locate research methods textbooks that effectively covered the range of data that participants had contributed. I largely drew on Rose (2012); while Rose's focus is on visual analysis, her emphasis on methodology (rather than only on practical tips about the 'doing' of visual analysis) enabled me to expand her suggestions to guide the analysis of all the submitted data.

In analysing images, Rose (2012: 20) distinguishes between three key 'modalities': the 'technological' (concerned with how an image is produced), the 'compositional' (concerned with an image's visual and compositional characteristics), and the 'social' (concerned with "the range of economic, social and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image"). These modalities are overlaid with three 'sites', each with a different focus and range of potential research questions: the site of production, the site of the image itself, and the site of audiencing. Rose (2012: 40) argues that the "social effects of an image or set of images are made at [these] three sites … Theoretical debates about how to interpret images can be understood as debates over which of these sites and modalities is most important for understanding an image, and why". For this part of the study – focused on understanding how participants' representations of Tasmanian forests reflect or illustrate ontological security – the

most relevant areas of focus were the 'compositional' and 'social' modalities. Researchers often deem compositional analysis to be insufficient on its own (Rose 2012: 55), but it is useful in approaching the idea of 'representation'. Analysis of the social modality is an obvious choice given this study's disciplinary grounding in sociology.

I located these modalities at the site of the image itself. The site of production lends itself to questions of data creation, rather than representations (as discussed above), while the site of audiencing is not relevant to this study's aims of exploring participants' understandings and experiences. The site of the image itself instead prioritises the participants' chosen representations of Tasmanian forests. I asked the following questions of each of the materials submitted by participants:

- What is in this image or text? What does the image or text denote? What compositional strategies have been employed, and to what effect? This reflects the compositional modality.
- What is 'the feel' of this image or text? What is my 'gut reaction' to this image or text? This reflects that "[e]lements of compositional interpretation provide one way to increase the experiential, embodied response to visual images" (Rose 2012: 55).
- What social processes does this image or text relate to or reflect? What are the connotations of the image or text? Which codes and themes of the research project does the image or text engage with (particularly as codes do not refer exclusively to written material, but potentially also visual data [Saldaña 2009: 14])? This reflects the social modality.

In analysing in the social modality, I found it helpful that participants often provided captions which outlined what it was that they found meaningful about the chosen text(s). For the written responses I used thematic analysis (in much the same way as I did for the interview transcripts),

alongside a consideration of the compositional choices made by the participants in their writing. While I have considered participants' submissions and their interview data separately, I am aware that the topics discussed in interviews has influenced the content of participants' contributions. Analysing these data separately, while also considering the links between them, encourages in-depth inquiry (Rose 2012: 315).

Developing a way of gathering, interpreting, and communicating this submitted data – particularly due to a lack of published guides – has been a learning experience for me, and it has come with some limitations. It is not a major part of the project, and these submitted data are supplemental to the themes explored through the interview data. Further, the range of materials contributed by participants, and the time constraints imposed by the doctoral process, have resulted in a less meticulous analysis than I afforded to the interview transcripts. Nevertheless, I have approached this task with a commitment to methodological rigour, and these submissions fulfil the purpose for which I intended them: giving voice to participants' representations of Tasmanian forests, in a way that 'made sense' to each contributor. I found it fascinating to see the ways that these submissions reflected the conversations I had had with participants in the interview space, while also acting as embodied, performative, nonverbal representations of the ongoing impact of Tasmanian forests in participants' lives.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained and justified the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological underpinnings of this inquiry, and the choice of research methods to answer the research questions and realise the research's aims. The social constructionist epistemology permeates

the approach and motivation of the entire study, while the theoretical framework grounds the themes of symbolism and experience throughout the thesis. The methodological concerns and choice of methods have produced the data that the following chapters present and discuss.

The next chapter opens Part 2 of this thesis. The first of three discussion chapters, Chapter 4 explores participants' 'forest understandings'. These are the thoughts, opinions, and concerns that participants held about Tasmanian forests, established through engagement with Tasmanian media, politics, people, space, and industry.

Part 2

Chapter 4: Before the Forest

This chapter is the first of three that present and discuss the research findings. Each chapter opens with a context section, describing the participants' actions that are relevant to the chapter at hand. The remainder of each chapter is organised by theme; I present findings first, followed by a discussion section that explicitly links the relevant theme to the model of ontological security presented in Chapter 2.

This chapter discusses the understandings, opinions, and concerns that participants 'take with' them to forest spaces: it is what happens 'before' the forest. This includes participants' definitions of forest places in Tasmania; global environmental concerns; opinions about forestry in Tasmania; and conceptualisations of demarcated space in the state.

Context: Setting

As discussed in Chapter 3, the definition of 'Tasmanian forests' used in this thesis reflects participants' views. I explicitly established a shared definition (per interview) with every participant, except Reg (although during our interview Reg still offered implicit definitions of Tasmanian forests, as per his comment in Table 5 below). Appreciating the multifaceted nature of these definitions has been essential in understanding the significance and complexity of participants' forest understandings and experiences. Table 5 summarises participants' definitions and descriptions of Tasmanian forests.

Tasmanian forests are…	
Trees	Well, when I think of a forest I think of a stretch of unbroken… area, filled with trees, trees predominating, and then understory. (Marie)
Ecosystems	A forest is a closed canopy, probably 6-8 metres tall, with an understory, and it's a complex ecosystem. (Henry)
Diverse	To me, it means all of the forest areas in Tasmania. So that includes everything from the, the coastal woodlands, and Freycinet Peninsula, for example, to the, the tall forests of the Styx and the Weld and the Tarkine, places like that. (Hugh)
Not 'this', but 'that'	In my mind there's a difference between 'forest' and 'bush', and bush is sort of the more dry bits with less moss. Whereas the side of Mt. Wellington is nice and damp and dark and mossy and green. (Amelia)
Unique and uniquely Tasmanian	Tasmanian forests have a uniqueness about themselves, in terms of where they are, and the climate, and the social situation. (Priscilla)
Natural and/or untouched	Well, nature. Not man-made. So it doesn't necessarily have to be like, old-growth trees and things like that. But I guess reserves, and national parks, and things that are relatively untouched. (Zoe)
Wild	What I recognise as 'forest' is probably more like scrub really, than forest, but it's wild space if you like. And so I tend to generalise 'forest' for 'wild space'. (Leon)
Habitat	All those old forests we chopped down, they were the home of owls, parrots, possums, sugar gliders, all breed in holes in trees and you have to have old trees. (Don)
Medicinal potential	There's untold medicinal things that haven't been discovered … you know, cures for all sort of stuff. Bacteria and enzymes… and funguses and animals, critters and stuff that haven't even been discovered yet, you know, that are in these native forests … they might contain the seeds for survival, you know. (Peter)
A rarity	Tassie is one of the few remaining places left, in which you can honestly see what is genuinely old-growth. And there's little of that left. (Reg)
Multifaceted	Oh, it means lots of things to me… (Catherine)

Table 5. Participants' definitions of 'Tasmanian forests'

There is a cultural preoccupation with wilderness ideals in (and about) Tasmania. As Lara astutely put it, there is an undervaluing of forest spaces such as the "urban bush sprawl fringe" because "there's no visual language to see it, because our cultural association is with wilderness, and the wilderness has sublime connotations". Despite this, the range of definitions offered by participants indicates a certain 'openness' about what they consider to be a forest space (and participants' choices of 'special places', discussed below, also reflects this). Participants often spoke about the forest's constituent elements, from orchids and individual trees through to rivers, lakes, mountains, and coastal areas. While governmental policies and industry practices (often necessarily) operate within specifically delineated definitions of forest areas and forest types, it is unsurprising that these definitions may fail to hold resonance with the public. As Jane put it, "I know there is a definition, I know there's a map with green places on it… for me, I really don't care much about that". There have been occasions when environmental groups in Tasmania have identified high-conservation areas using definitions that assisted their goals in a bureaucratic context, but did not resonate with the public (Buckman 2008: 92). Decades later, it seems that politicians, industry figures, conservation movements, and members of the public are still not necessarily operating under the same definitions of 'Tasmanian forests'.

Seventeen participants spoke in some manner about forestry plantations. These conversations largely seemed to function as a means of clarifying what a forest is, by defining what it is not (a plantation). Several participants were explicit in this comparison, likening plantations to a monoculture or crop.

> You put a plantation there - that's just crop. It's just a crop of one species, it's not forest, it's crop. Even when it's mature - it's just a tree crop. That's not a forest at all, it's not even woodland… (Don)

> I'm not including in my mind the notion of the … plantation forest. To me they're not forest… they're commercial ventures. They're not forests, they don't have the environmental credibility of the forest. (Ken)

> [Forest is] the natural world, as opposed to the built world which is what a plantation is - it's part of the built world. (Leon)

> A lot of people confuse plantation with a forest, you know - a monoculture. (Peter)

An important distinction between 'real' forests and plantations seemed to lie in the potential for nonhuman animals to flourish within the space. By this definition, a plantation is not a forest, as a plantation is unable to support life to the same extent as a reserved regrowth or old-growth forest is.

> No [plantations do not count as forests]. Well… well actually, no, it would depend on whether or not it was harvested plantation. So like, forestry I don't really count it as forest because even though they do plant the trees, anything that goes in there, any wildlife that goes in there, risks being killed when they harvest trees … it's not a permanent thing. So then I don't really feel like you can class it as forest, because it's not going to be there for very long. (Zoe)

> [Online] there was a forestry supporter who was talking about how the re-growth forests are just hunky-dory, and I was just like, you know, bullshit. Bullshit. The insect populations are different, the habitat's been lost, the animals haven't come back … they'll log a coupe and the wallabies will try and come back to where they lived, and they're sort of - you can see them, they're sort of standing there, going like, 'where's the forest?' (Nick)

Nick went further than most in this assessment, dismissing the habitat potential of former plantation/regrowth forest. At times, participants' descriptions of plantations took on a moralistic tone. These accounts tended to contrast the perceived authenticity and 'rightness' of forests with the inauthenticity and problematic nature of plantations.

> I don't quite get it. Why we would cut down ancient forests, old forests, natural forests, and stick up a bunch of plantations in a line? I get that they say that's easier to look after, but… so I get really pissed off with that, because I know what's been there. (Catherine)

> Plantations are problematic as well. I mean, there are parts of Tasmania where you drive to, and the colours are all wrong. (Lara)

> People just don't realise how much forestry there is … it's plantations. Plantations. So, it's… and you see that on the East Coast, you see it on the West Coast, and it's just… it's just wrong. (Diane)

The participants of this study were particularly negative about plantations; the Tasmanian interviewees of Miller and Buys' (2014) study, in contrast, expressed much more ambivalence

about the effects of plantations. This ambivalence could perhaps be attributed to the rural communities in which Miller and Buys' participants lived – yet several participants of this inquiry also lived rurally or near plantations. Regardless, this opposition to plantations reinforces the notion that a forest is not 'just' a stand of trees. Rather, participants' definitions depict forests as a complex coalescing of meanings, experiences, and temporal associations. The assessment that a plantation is not a forest – that it is considered to be inauthentic, wrong, or lifeless – suggests that plantations do not symbolise what forests symbolise: a form of materiality which supports both human relationships with the nonhuman, and enduring nonhuman life.

'Tasmanian forests' is a broad arena. Jones and Cloke (2002: 11-12) suggest that while nonhuman ecosystems are "so often encountered and recounted in macro-spatial swathes - as wilderness, outback, industrialized agriculture, and so on", smaller, specific places and spaces constitute these 'macro-scale swathes'. Each of these specific sites have their own character and enmeshment in human society; as such, I asked participants about the particular places and 'special' places that they had experienced. (That participants were easily able to name specific sites contrasts interestingly with Rose's [1996: 2] claim that "there are … very few [Aboriginal] songs and poems that are actually concerned with specific places".) Some sites were named by multiple participants, including Mt. Field, the Styx Valley, Freycinet National Park, the Tarkine (takayna), the Overland Track, Cradle Mountain, and the state's South-West. These choices are unsurprising, given their stature as iconic Tasmanian sites. However, participants also named much less renowned locations. Examples included two small reserves

in Hobart's surrounds – the Waterworks Reserve and Knocklofty Reserve – and unnamed sites that held personal significance for the participant. Helen, for example, told me:

> One place that was really special to me when I was at uni, and especially when I was living on campus, was a short walk up from the uni accommodation to Mt Nelson [in Hobart's surrounds]. I used to walk up there and… it wasn't exactly rainforest, but it was still bush area. Just used to feel at peace, go there to escape from the stress of uni and exams and all that … that was quite important to me while I lived on campus.

When asked about Tasmanian places that were special to them, some participants struggled to choose a single site. For example:

> Beaches are always a favourite. But then I guess like, driving up Mt. Wellington, and hitting that reserve. Um… that's a favourite, the west coast is like… I love it … Arthur-Pieman conservation area [that's] definitely a favourite. Oh, and the Henty Dunes … does the national park on South Bruny count? Yeah, okay. That's like my favourite spot ever, actually. (Zoe)

> Yeah, quite a few little spots come to mind. Just little sections, often away from the track a bit that I just know about because I've been through there so many times. And the guides sort of pass them off between guides and say, 'hey, you've got to go check out this little area, it's incredible', and sneak down there. Yeah, there's a few. (Jack)

It was clear that participants did not limit their considerations of 'special' or notable places to iconic sites. As Hugh put it, a special or favourite place can be "really, anywhere. Anywhere in

the wild parts of Tasmania", while Catherine told me that "[the reason] I can't move to Melbourne is I am so connected to place, and it's not one place but it's our forests, that's what I feel connected to". Daniel even named an unseen place as special, describing a particular "Huon Pine reserve out west of Strathgordon … that'd be pretty special [to see]". Poignantly, Marie described a pre-flood Lake Pedder as a favourite place of her childhood.

These responses suggest that 'special' or valued places in Tasmania are not necessarily synonymous with those sites most visited or commonly deemed 'iconic'. This has implications for development policies and conservation efforts alike. A narrow focus on iconic, old-growth, 'pristine', and/or remote spaces potentially erases the significance of other, underecognised spaces which nonetheless may be significant to everyday Tasmanians, leaving these places at risk of development or restricted access. Efforts by conservationist groups to safeguard high-conservation value areas (such as the Wilderness Society's Tarkine campaign [Wilderness Society 2018]) potentially leave other areas to be 'swallowed up'. As alluded to above, Lara recounted:

> [I am] talking about land that's … an urban bush sprawl fringe. So, forty years ago it was ten kilometres out of town – I mean, it could be anywhere on the fringe of Hobart. It was very rural and it seemed very distant, and it had a lot of the qualities that I imagined people associate with wilderness, because you could actually get away from people and be by yourself. But now, you know, people are moving into the area more and more, although a lot of the land is still – it's classified as rural … partly [people] don't see it because there's no language with which to see it, there's no visual language to see

> it … [wilderness is] very romanticised, and it takes in the idea of the 'view'. So when you've got something that isn't any of those things, there's not necessarily… well, there isn't a cultural value for it. Or not an articulated one. [A Government report] talked about … aesthetic values, and how it was deemed okay to develop Tolmans Hill [in Hobart's surrounds] because it was considered to be of low aesthetic value, and low economic value. And… you know, how is that aesthetic value determined? … for me, it's more about the… what you encounter, perhaps in a more everyday situation, which is small-scale. I mean, I actually find it fascinating.

I am not suggesting that conservationist groups shift their focus away from high-conservation value areas (although there is an "increasing recognition [that conservation efforts] must also include landscapes where humans are dominant" [Head 2010: 434]). Nor can such groups defend all those areas that potentially hold value for Tasmanians. I agree, however, with Lara's sentiment that the 'language' of special places in Tasmania is one of limitations and assumptions. As I will discuss in further detail below, this cultural language also echoes the devaluation of Tasmanian forests as 'unnatural' or not 'pristine' following exposure to particular forms of human intervention.

'Tasmania' itself is also a place, imbued with materiality, meaning, and practices, and located in accordance with other places (Cresswell 2015). Around half of participants talked about their sense of pride, connection, and/or enjoyment of Tasmania as a place to live. Participants described a sense of 'proud ownership' of the state:

> I think, you know, a lot of people who have been here feel that empathy, or that belonging. I don't know whether it's because we're an island, and you know, I think also island people around the world tend to have a sense of ownership - because we haven't got anyone abutting against us. And I think Australia is a bit like that in a larger sense, but I think, you know - this is ours. (Diane)

> … our Tasmanian biological heritage [is] important because it's Tasmanian, and it's ours. (Marie)

> … if people try and say their bush is better than ours, for example Western Australia, I'm a bit like, 'nahhh… no way mate!' [laughs] (Claire)

While I did not ask all participants where they were born, I estimate that at least a third were born outside of Tasmania. Amongst all participants, however – including those born interstate or overseas – there seemed a sense of Tasmania being 'home'. Henry and Don, neither of whom were born in the state, discussed actively making Tasmania their home through relation to the nonhuman environment:

> I have my birthplace, and I have my home, and they're different … But my home is in Tasmania, because you make your home. (Henry)

> I've been here in Tasmania since 1969 … I fell in love with the place straight away. And discovered the scrub … when you're young you're adventurous. I'm still very adventurous even though I'm not young anymore - and there's

> lots, lots to find out. And I liked exploring, I liked the landscape, and there's tonnes of places to go. (Don)

Each of these stories of pride, possession, and belonging indicate that participants related to Tasmania as 'home', a site in which one can find a sense of belonging built upon the nonhuman's material constancy. To paraphrase Young (2005: 140), encounters with material spaces invite the individual to imbue those spaces with meaning, which come to constitute the individual in turn. There is also a sense of relationship implied in claiming a place as one's home. The relationship described by participants was one of responsibility, pride, and advocacy: showing Tasmania off to visitors, claiming the state as "ours", or moving to Tasmania and 'falling in love' (as Don did). To an extent, Kimmerer's (2013) description of the 'obligatory relationship' with the nonhuman applies here. This is a form of relationship in which, provided for by the nonhuman environment, one feels bound to 'repay the favour'; as Kimmerer (2013: 28) describes, the "currency of gift economy is, at its root, reciprocity. In Western thinking, private land is understood to be a 'bundle of rights,' whereas in a gift economy property has a 'bundle of responsibilities' attached". While Kimmerer's point is to distinguish a relationship of 'gift economy' with the typically Western approach of commodification – and she is largely correct to do so – there is an element of obligation (born of being 'provided for' by the nonhuman) present in participants' identification with Tasmania. This relationship may not exclude the possibility of commodification; Daniel, for example, professed a love of (and relationship with) Tasmanian forests, while also advocating for the use of Tasmanian timbers in products with high monetary value (which I discuss further in Chapter 6). These interconnected senses of home, materiality, and responsibility, however, likely account for

some of the tensions that participants expressed about the explicitly and exclusively commodifying approach of industry practices.

Similar to these descriptions of Tasmania as 'home', participants also regularly characterised Tasmania as a place of 'refuge'. Around two-thirds of participants invoked this notion of refuge, describing the state as a rare and unique place in which Tasmanians are lucky to live.

> So you know, like in Tasmania, I believe we've got some of the oldest untouched forests in the world, and that's pretty amazing, that's pretty important because I've been to Europe, and I've seen that… you know, this is very rare, you know, across most of the world. (Priscilla)

> … yeah I mean, they don't have forests in many countries, in all countries, do they? So they wouldn't be able to relate to this [research] at all. Yeah. We're lucky aren't we, that we've got these wonderful places. (Henry)

> Our landscape… our, yeah, I think we're the most fortunate people … it's the reason I'm here … I think we're one of those places left in the world that there's not many like Tassie, and potentially as a community we can sort of show the world how we can and should live with nature. So… and maybe not be full of the greed and the separateness from nature that so many other parts of the world are. (Catherine)

Sometimes participants engaged with the concept of refuge in a more nihilistic manner. Rather than Tasmania being a place to live well, the implication in these descriptions is that Tasmania is simply an ideal place to live amidst a dying world:

> No [I don't think there's anything to be done about climate change]. Not really. Survive. One of the other reasons I think Tasmania is as good a place to live as any. (Leon)

> I think in about a hundred years it'll be pretty serious as well, but… we'll survive it. I don't know that the majority of the population will survive it, but I think the certain - the fittest people, and Tassie is a good place to be… (George)

Such sentiments are clearly reflective of the notion of nonhuman environments as places of wellbeing and escape (as discussed in Chapter 2). In this case, Tasmania and its 'wilderness' do not simply offer refuge from the local built environment, but from the consequences and threats of a global built environment. Where the diminishment of global places challenges ontological security (and this is particularly evident in Leon and George's responses), the perception of Tasmania as refuge offers a symbol of safety – albeit threatened, temporary, or contingent. Conceptualisations of Tasmania (both as home and as refuge) also locate the state, relative to other places – Tasmanians speaking about Tasmania are inevitably commenting on other places, too. This is particularly evident in the following section, which details participants' general environmental concerns.

Concerns

> I'm very concerned about the state of the natural environment in our, in our whole world … it's under threat in so many ways from our civilisation, from logging, from climate change, from… soil erosion, from fish farming - every bit of the natural environment is under assault by our civilisation. (Hugh)

This section details participants' environmental concerns. Every participant expressed worries about global and local human threats to the condition of the Earth, reflecting Sayer's (2011: 1; original emphasis) description of humans as fundamentally "sentient, *evaluative beings* … [who] can suffer". Of those concerns not explicitly regarding Tasmanian forestry practices, participants' environmental concerns centred on three key themes: sustainability, extinction and loss, and climate change. This is the context of evaluation and anxiety in which participants were encountering and reacting to forests and forestry in Tasmania; as such there is a important link between environmental concerns at large (both non-Tasmanian, and non-forestry) and concerns about forestry in Tasmania. In discussing human-forest relationships, it is necessary to acknowledge that for many, these engagements take place in a climate of fear and distress.

Sustainability

Many participants expressed concerns about issues surrounding sustainability and resource use. These concerns particularly related to sustainable forestry and agricultural practices, and concerns about plastics, other resource consumption, and resource wastage. These are very much 'contemporary concerns', as Priscilla describes:

> … people have become so greedy and so feeling entitled to their habits, of indulging in meat and seafood and the environment. You know, like, just polluting because they see that it's important for them [to] drive cars, and have heating and air-conditioning and everything other mod-con, and yeah I kinda see it as wrecking the earth.

Common in participants' sustainability concerns was a sense of 'temporal disconnect'. This refers to the tension felt between the potential for materials to last a long time (indeed, much longer than human life spans), and the actual use of these materials in ephemeral, disposable ways.

> I reckon we'll choke on our plastic … because we've invented this incredible product that's so durable, it's amazing, it's such a good product, except we're using it for disposable purposes. (Jack)

> … most resources that are taken out of the ground are dumped something like within three months - like 90% of everything that's pulled out of the ground is thrown away within three months. (Ben)

> … the idea of chopping down old-growth forest, making it into woodchips to sell … It's really really sad, chopping down these great big gorgeous giant trees that were home for all these critters, and making them into advertising material. (Don)

> You're seeing trees which might be three or four metres wide, the base just… is severed and carted off to be turned into tiny little pieces of wood that get turned into paper that get thrown away, or half of it gets turned into pollution or emissions or effluent of some description … there's the sense of just, you know, utter sort of reckless, reckless waste. (Matthew)

Sustainability concerns are inherently future-focused, and are a strong example of how the nonhuman functions as symbolic of the future. The following sections and chapters will explore

this idea in depth. These responses also relate to the idea of 'reification' in building and design, as I discuss in Chapter 6. 'Reification' refers to the act of 'making real' the forest; that is, creating something long-lasting from the transience and/or passed time embodied by the forest's materiality. This clearly echoes the sense of lamentation in the quotes above. Where sustainable practices involve a respect for the past represented by a forest or tree, manufacturing processes such as woodchipping or pulping are a form of transgression.

Extinction and loss

This sense of waste also permeated the second theme of participants' concerns: extinction and loss. As Catherine glibly put it, "once it's gone, well basically it's gone". Concerns about extinction and loss were to do with nonhuman species, ecosystems, and places:

> All the mass extinctions are going to be our fault, you know like, we're clearing habitats, we're changing everything and then wondering why things, you know, things are dying off. (Zoe)

> When I was eighteen, twenty, I was putting bulldozers through rainforest, um, rip tear slash not caring. It's only by being involved in the bush and seeing the bush, and suddenly coming to a realisation that, hey, it's not coming back. (George)

> I had to walk through and survey each patch [of forest before it was cleared], which was a bit sort of depressing in a way because I knew that after I'd looked through that, that'd be gone next I arrived on-site. (James)

It is clear in these responses that participants squarely placed the blame for extinction and loss on human actions. James' story also hinted at the emotional dimension of this loss, with his sadness entangled in a sense of helplessness. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a contemporary Western tendency to delegitimise emotional responses in favour of rationality; this is perhaps particularly the case in regard to environmental management, traditionally the domain of science and technology (see also Trigger 1999: 170). There are certainly 'rational', cognitive responses to species extinction and habitat loss, such as appeals to the environmental value of biodiversity, or appeals to retain species and ecosystems for human enjoyment. It is important, however, to remember that loss is a fundamentally emotional experience, as Henry's recollections shows:

> I don't know if you've heard about the fires up around Lake Mackenzie last year, devastating. Pencil pines… we sampled that about six months before it before it was all burnt down, and I haven't been back since because I think if I went there I would bloody cry. I really would, I would be terribly sad. Because they were… minimum 450, 500, 600 years old, in a pretty harsh environment. Strictly speaking they're not a forest, but they're an ecosystem which exists, you know, soil type, elevation, drainage, rainfall, all of those factors that go together to make them exist the way they are. All of which seemed to me to be a really harmonious, they've all… all of these factors have come together, and these things thrive. So that's… that's sort of an emotional response to what's not there anymore, because it's sad. Because… and maybe we could have done something about it, and maybe we couldn't,

> but that's another issue. The main thing that hits you in the gut is that they're gone.

A striking example of the emotional power of extinction and loss is the establishment of the Remembrance Day for Lost Species (Hance 2016). This annual memorial acts as a ritual day of mourning and celebration of the numerous nonhuman species lost to extinction. The impetus for this event demonstrates the emotional (and powerfully non-rational) impact of extinction and loss. As Hance (2016) explains:

> In early 2010, artist, activist and mother, Persephone Pearl, headed to the Bristol Museum … She sat on a bench and looked at a stuffed animal behind glass: a thylacine. Before then, she'd never heard of the marsupial carnivore that went extinct in 1936 … Pearl felt grief, deep grief, over the loss of a creature she'd never once seen in life, a species that had been shot to extinction because European settlers had deemed it vermin. Yet, how do we grieve for extinct species when there are no set rituals, no extinction funerals, no catharsis for the pain caused by a loss that in many ways is simply beyond human comprehension?

This response demonstrates the emotional and ethical dimensions of concerns about extinction and loss. It is a reaction of grief, striking in its resistance to contemporary notions of reason and rationality. Head (2016: 39) argues that Australia's colonial history and commitment to capitalist/Enlightenment myths of progress have ingrained a perception of an 'imagined past' of 'pristine nature', with logic-based approaches (such as conservation sciences and environmental management) "hav[ing] a particular issue with grief because of

their adherence to a past baseline". How might this problematic perception of a 'pristine past' collide with the experience of "loss … beyond human comprehension", as Hance (2016) puts it? Head (2016: 40) suggests that recognising human intervention and the 'messiness' of human impact should not "be read as belittling mourning for lost places … Rather it gives us pause to consider what we are grieving for, and whether we ever actually had it". Regardless of approach and perception, what is unifying here is the 'democracy' of ecological grief, through the recognition of the varied ways individuals express and experience concerns about extinction and loss.

Climate change

Finally, climate change seemed to be the non-forestry environmental issue that most concerned participants. Twenty participants named climate change as one of their environmental concerns, and participants appeared to unanimously understand climate change as anthropogenically-influenced, if not anthropogenically-caused. Some participants were particularly pessimistic about climate change:

> … it's real, it's happening. [laughs] We're getting more extreme weather events … And why is that? Humans … [deforestation and fossil fuel use are] causing climate change, which is ultimately going to destroy the world, sadly. But whether it's too late, I don't know. (Helen)

> I think we are past the limit of survivability, in terms of climate change. (Reg)

There is a two-fold connection between climate change and forests. Firstly, climate change threatens forests, as Jack identified (below). Secondly, participants (such as Catherine and George) recognised deforestation as potentially exacerbating climate change.

> Big fires, huge hot spells, massive floods, unseasonal winds … And it's like the forest is a bit stressed, because it had such a hot harsh summer, and then an incredible amount of moisture, and a huge amount of snow in the spring now, a bit later. And it seems like a lot of trees have been weakened. And the same trees have stood up to massive wind events for decades, every year, but this year they're getting smashed to bits, and there's a lot of limbs down. (Jack)

> When it all comes to it - protecting forests, protecting oceans, not over-farming, not mining… it's all got to do with climate change … So for me, it's actually all of the work that I do [protecting forests] is about how we will have an impact on climate. (Catherine)

> I don't think there's any dispute that we have climate change. It's exacerbated by deforestation. (George)

Similarly, Alan identified "world deforestation" as a driver of climate change. However, Alan was careful to distinguish global patterns of deforestation from the smaller-scale clearfelling practices seen in Tasmania.

These three themes of concern suggest a potentially troubling climate in which to establish a sense of ontological security. Norgaard's (2006) work offers insight into this process,

proposing that when faced with environmental problems (specifically climate change in her study), people may engage in emotional and communicational norms as a means of 'protecting' themselves from confronting the stress and fear that such issues induce. I saw a similar process expressed by the participants of this study, albeit through the concept of education. Fifteen participants spoke about education in some manner, and the common thread of these discussions was participants' desire for other people to 'get it' – that is, to understand the value of the nonhuman. The implicit argument here was that increasing others' (particularly children's) education and awareness of environmental issues would help those people to 'get it'.

> I really wanted to work with kids … because we need to inspire a bit of change for the next generation, because our generation or the ones before us haven't done so well. And a lot of the kids get it, which is really nice to see. (Jack)

> I think it's important to [spread that message] … educate children … educate people, even adults … just play the message, and it depends on each individual, if they understand it, maybe they will change. (Lee)

I propose that this insistence on the value of education acted as a strategy (albeit probably an unconscious one) through which participants could feel more secure about the planet's future. In this way, the confidence in the efficacy of education (whether well-founded or not) acts as a form of 'inoculation' against concerns about the future. This is a form of hope, and of defence of the nonhuman – a belief that humans may not unthinkingly destroy a hoped-for future, so long as they simply know, and therefore care, more.

Concerns and ontological security

Clark's (2011) evocative arguments highlight that the inherent volatility of materiality means that the conditions in and on which humans build their lives may disappear at any moment. Yet humans live – understandably, necessarily – in ways that let them feel that the future is knowable; this then collides with an increasing awareness of the problematic practices that potentially threaten the earth's materiality. Environmental concerns relate significantly to existential matters. Participants' environmental concerns were largely global in nature, illustrating the wide scope of what they perceived to be worrying and threatening. As I will return to, this global scope suggests that in understanding human-forest interactions, it is necessary to consider the 'bigger picture' of interconnected and globalised environmental problems. There is a rich vein of potential future research in exploring the implication of ontological security in these environmental concerns, and in non-forest ecosystems, too.

The special places of Tasmania do not exist in a vacuum. As Bob Brown (1983: 28) puts it, "Tasmania's Wild Rivers are a litmus for the world. If, in this peaceful and lucky corner of the planet, we cannot save these rivers, surely the world itself is beyond rescue from the greed and shortsightedness of human affairs". As seen in participants' responses above, it is common for Tasmanians to extol the virtues of the state's diverse ecosystems. To see Tasmania as unique or as a refuge, however, necessarily entails comparison with the characteristics of other places. This expansion of perspective extends to environmental concerns. As Matthew pointed out:

> [Old-growth logging is] awful in its own right, but it's also an analogue for what's happening to other living systems around the planet, including the atmosphere and the ice caps.

These global concerns underscore the vulnerability of humans; environmental concerns are, essentially, concerns that human actions are making humans (and nonhumans) ever more vulnerable. As such, environmental concerns are concerns about threats to the knowable future (and are a diminishment of hope for this anticipated future). Environmental concerns therefore reflect the construction of the nonhuman as symbolic of the future. These concerns (and subsequent feelings of danger) may clearly pose a challenge to an individual's sense of a secure future; that is, to their sense of ontological security.

For participants, environmental concerns about climate change, sustainability, and extinction and loss informed views of the value and treatment of Tasmania's forest spaces. To understand how Tasmanians feel about forests and forestry practices, there needs to be an understanding of global patterns of environmental degradation, and the feeling of precarity that often accompanies the recognition of such degradation. To proclaim that Tasmania is "a heavily forested state [with] over half of the total area of forest [held] in reserves for conservation" (STT 2018g) is reasonable and accurate. However, the environmental credentials of STT (and other extractive industries) need to be based on a global, interconnected view of space, place, and environmental damages. The remainder of this chapter narrows from this global perspective, to focus in on participants' thoughts and concerns about Tasmanian forests.

Forestry (in) Tasmania

> Okay, you really want to know about attitudes to forestry? Forestry or forests? (Alan)

Chapter 1 described the Tasmanian context in which this research takes place. The state's environmental political history is fundamentally a narrative of threat: threat to democracy, trust, and place. This inquiry is an exploration of human-forest interactions and as I expected (and as Alan's quote above reflects), conversations about these interactions were inextricable from at least some discussion of Tasmania's forestry industry. The following section briefly discusses the role of media consumption in informing and giving language to participants' views of forestry in Tasmania. I then explore participants' understandings of the Tasmanian forestry industry's politics, economics, and practices.

It is important to note that Forestry Tasmania's rebranding as Sustainable Timbers Tasmania occurred in 2017, after I concluded fieldwork. As such, participants referred to 'Forestry Tasmania' in their responses, rather than STT. While the aim of this rebranding was no doubt an effort at distancing the enterprise from past indiscretions – that is, a classic example of 'greenwashing' (Miller 2017) – it would be a mistake to dismiss participants' concerns as concerns about a former regime. Concerns about Forestry Tasmania are concerns about STT.

Division and distrust

During this study's initial development, I had intended to place greater emphasis on the role of media sources in the construction of ontological security in relation to Tasmanian forests. During the interviews, however, it became apparent that this was not a particularly salient

theme for many participants. I suspect that the participants of this study were more reliant upon in-situ experiences and emotional responses, rather than media sources, in informing their forest engagements. Those participants that I did speak to about media engagement focused on news media, particularly newspapers and radio. This reflects the deeply politicised nature of forestry issues in Tasmania.

In discussing newspapers, most references made were to Tasmania's highest-circulation newspaper, *The Mercury* (based in Hobart). Opinions about *The Mercury*'s forestry-related content varied; both Priscilla and Matthew thought that the newspaper gave a 'fair deal' to environmentalist causes, while Claire described the publication as "pretty Labor-biased, but … that can change sometimes to be more Liberal. But I don't think they really go towards the Greens side of things too much". Alan, by contrast, claimed there is:

> … a huge, a huge bias against forestry, which comes from the city, from the newspapers which are mostly delivered in the city, and it's against the country … I was afraid that you'd be over-influenced by people are who are influenced by *The Mercury*.

About both *The Mercury* and the state's Northern newspapers (*The Advocate* and *The Examiner*), several participants voiced concerns that the publications do not cover everything, or do not cover the truth, about issues such as the Tasmanian Forest Agreement (TFA) or Greens Party politics. Essentially, participant's mixed opinions about the state's printed news media seemed to largely reflect their own biases (which is not unexpected). Other than newspapers, the most common news source that participants mentioned was radio programs, particularly state and national ABC bulletins.

There were indications from several participants – both explicit and implicit – that their media engagement was largely passive, social, and/or built upon 'echo chambers'. For example, Claire and Hugh both mentioned reading newspapers only if one happened to be at hand, while Amelia and Zoe acknowledged the extent to which their existing networks (through Facebook) shaped the information they engaged with about forestry issues. Those participants who had elected to receive information through organisations (Marie, for example, received Wilderness Society newsletters, and Priscilla read Green Left Weekly publications) were also clearly engaging with media shaped by their social networks. Beyond formal media sources, several participants identified conversations with others as a useful source of information about forestry issues:

> The family along the road, my daughter plays with a lot - the dad is a wood-maker, cabinet-maker. And he has an interesting … perspective on forest issues as well, that we often will get the other side from. You know he'll say, 'oh I can't get, I can't get Huon Pine anymore, it's too expensive for me to buy', or, 'I can't get this and that anymore', and we'll talk about it. (Marie)

> [Industrial logging is] not wise utilisation of a forest resource, in my view. And a lot of this is backed up by little chance meetings you have over the years, usually with people that work in the industry, often on the ground. And they all say the same thing. You know, it's been open-slather, you know, good, mill-able trees have been split and sent to the chipper… (James)

It is evident in participants' responses that the networks they were a part of shaped the news and information sources that they engaged with. While some argue that the concept of media 'echo chambers' is overstated (Dubois & Blank 2018), there is ample evidence to suggest that relationships and social networks inform media engagement (for example, Bakshy et al. 2015). This also supports my argument that participants tended to rely more heavily on experience (both their own and known others') than media sources to inform their views about forests in Tasmania.

As will become apparent in the remainder of this chapter, elements of participants' language tended to reflect common, media-driven rhetoric. The clearest examples were in references to the "400,000 hectares" issue, denoting the controversies surrounding the rezoning of land after the dissolution of the TFA (as discussed in Chapter 1). A further example was in the concept of the 'locked up' forest. Further, local media sources have long played a role in the generation and perpetuation of the very idea of the 'forestry wars'. As Jane observed, "the media makes more mileage out of doing 'one or the other'. So does the Government, taking one stance or the other".

Unfortunately, narratives of conflict and 'sides' seem to have retained a great deal of currency in Tasmanians' perceptions of social relations in the state. It was common for participants to refer to Tasmanian society as suffering from long-term division, which governing bodies have been unwilling and/or unable to resolve. This carried with it a sense of weariness:

> The divisive nature of what's been happening in the past… it's so outdated. Surely we can do better than that. (Marie)

> I'm 52, and for almost all my adult life it's been the same divisiveness in forestry and the environment. (Ben)

At times, participants' descriptions of this division even took on militaristic tones. Matthew described forestry issues as seemingly "heading back to the barricades", while Reg told me that "I will bloody fight until my last breath, to maintain what I believe to be right". Accordingly, participants' responses largely echoed the discourse that defines the Tasmanian conflicts as a matter of two opposing 'sides' (as described in Chapter 1). Participants did not necessarily *believe* that there were two sides – as Jane put it, "I'm ambivalent about the polarisation of the two points … I know that in the middle there's a whole lot of well-intentioned people". Nevertheless, multiple participants used dichotomised language, or indicated that they thought that other Tasmanians believe there are 'sides'.

> There was a lot of argument in the community about it and I thought, well I can't really make a comment without research and becoming informed. So I started talking to people on both sides, and getting enough information to form my own opinion. (Daniel)

> I have, like, opinions both sides … I don't know anyone working in forestry anymore, so I don't hear the other side, at all. (Amelia)

The perception of sides and conflict inevitably leads to feelings of judgement, dismissal, and alienation (which I suspect are drivers of Alan's comment above about his perception of an anti-rural bias). The quote from Ben that opens Chapter 3 of this thesis – in which Ben laments the dismissal of environmental protesters as "idiots" – reflects this process. Similarly, as Matthew described:

> [There is a part of Tasmanian society that] I've always felt a bit alienated by because it doesn't respond to wilderness. So… you know, it might only be thirty or forty percent of the people, but they can be quite… um, prominent. You know. And aggressively anti-Greenie. (Matthew)

Around half of participants squarely implicated politicians – especially past Labor Party and current Liberal Party politicians – in the perpetuation of this social division. A few participants mentioned the Tasmanian Greens in a positive light; however, Jane described the Greens as "anti-logging", Daniel argued that the Greens are inconsistent in their aims and goals, and Alan and Gordon discussed their lack of respect for Greens politicians Bob Brown and Cassy O'Connor, respectively. Some participants suggested that politicians' poor decisions about pursuing a forestry industry in Tasmania were to blame for the continual renewal of social division. At other times, participants more directly accused politicians of purposefully exploiting these divisions for political gain.

> [Conservation issues] might be arising before long with this Barnett idiot in charge of the forests, making those kinds of statements - that's going to just pour kerosene on the fire. (Ken)

> [Since the] forest peace process was stopped in the new election, [when the] new government, Hodgman Government came in … it seemed so sad, that things could change so quickly and return to [the] past. (Ben)

> Well the government, the current government and the past Labor Government, for the most part have been very, in my opinion, have been very stupid about forestry. (Leon)

> We saw in the last federal election the [Liberals lose] their three Tasmanian House of Representatives seats. And it's partly because 'jobs versus the environment' was not part of that election … And the vote swung completely the other way, so lo and behold almost on cue you've got the Liberals, pretty much straight after that election saying, 'Ah, there's all these forests we're going to open up! We're going to bring the logging of these areas forward'. And really desiring a stoush with the Greenies, at the same time as claiming that it's part of their economic strategy for the state. (Matthew)

> The essential problem with the timber industry in Tasmania is that ... political parties have used it as a vile political wedge to divide communities. (Peter)

Several participants also identified the TFA's dismantlement as a contributor to social division in Tasmania (although Daniel was outspoken in his lack of trust in the TFA in the first place; see also Kanowski [2011] for a contemporaneous critique of the deal). Of those conversations in which participants discussed politics and politicians in Tasmania, the overwhelming message was one of division and distrust.

Participants' views regarding the economic and administrative management of forestry in Tasmania were almost wholly negative. Participants described Forestry Tasmania's business and economic model as unsustainable, mismanaged, too heavily subsidised, and ill-considered (particularly regarding woodchipping). Participants also argued that there is a lack of viable international market for Tasmanian native forest timber products, and identified fundamental problems with forestry as a business in Tasmania. These problems included the strong (perceived) influence of political interference in industry decisions.

> [Forestry Tasmania is] practically giving away our timber to make a small amount of money, when what they're giving away is worth far more than that … they're letting the government fund their losses… yeah, it's kind of criminal, I don't like it at all. (Priscilla)

> And you can see that it's unviable, I mean Forestry lost another 67 million last year alone. You know, that was another 67 million that should have gone into creating a sustainable job. (Peter)

> The world no longer really wants Tasmania's wood chips. Because they have cheaper options elsewhere, and it's not economically sound apparently to any longer do this. (Ken)

> [I would want to see] a change from the practice of going for the lowest common denominator, it's still woodchips … [I would want] a proper plan to get the best possible value out of the trees that we've got left. And that probably means decorative timbers, flooring, and furniture timbers. Low volume, highest possible value … Now that would, I guess, mean more job losses. But I don't think that many people understand that the forestry industry is worth only about one or two percent of Tasmania's GDP. (Gordon)

As with their views of Tasmania's political climate, distrust – even incredulity – marked participants' opinions about the economic management of forestry in the state. Several participants decried the extent of environmental destruction caused by forestry, particularly given the lack of fiscal pay-off. As Jack put it, "I'm happy for there to be a small industry, but I wouldn't want it to be subsidised … what's the point of chopping it down if they're not even

making money?" Trudgill (2001: 125) describes 'utilitarian' valuations of the nonhuman as those that prioritise the "[p]ractical and material exploitation of nature". Putting aside the many alternative ethical, aesthetic, and empathetic valuations of forests, participants did not view Forestry Tasmania as even fulfilling utilitarian functions. Jack's question – what is the point of forestry, if Forestry Tasmania does not make money? – therefore 'bridges' the concerns of diverse stakeholders.

Practices

Participants expressed slightly more ambivalence about forestry practices in the state. Alan seemed the most sympathetic participant, while Daniel was a vocal proponent for small-scale producers' access to specialty timbers. Many participants' assessments of Tasmanian forestry practices, however, reflected two themes: distaste with 'industrial', 'open-slather' forestry; and judgements of forestry as an 'out-dated' industry. Several participants also expressed concerns about the use of fire and poison as forestry management tools. For example, Don lamented that when woodchipping, foresters "leave half [the timber] behind, and they burn it, and then poison it, and plant it again, it's horrible".

Participants' views of forestry practices often echoed the sense of distrust expressed above. Over a third of participants spoke about the corrupt, deceptive, and/or arrogant nature of Tasmanian forestry practices.

> Because these areas [of old-growth] are a bit further away, a lot of it gets done in the sneaking and behind public eye. (Jack)

> [It can be difficult to get clear information on Forestry.] Which makes me quite anxious. Because I think … they should be more transparent. (Zoe)

> I just… just don't like the arrogance of it, you know. And the Hydro used to be like that, you know, arrogant. We can do whatever we want. Forestry, we can do whatever we want. (Diane)

> It's always been an industry spawned in deceit … you've only gotta look at the timber going down the road on woodchip trucks that's been split - I mean, they split it all in the bush now so that people aren't quite so revolted by seeing perfectly good sawlogs going to the woodchip mill, but that's the reality … It's just a, a bastardry to continue to do what they're doing. (Peter)

Clearfelling and woodchipping were the two practices that participants most regularly discussed. The gist of these conversations tended to be that clearfelling is too destructive a practice, with woodchipping perceived as excessively wasteful. There was some recognition that clearfelling is a safer option for forestry workers, such as in Amelia's comment that clearfelling "saves a lot of lives, you don't have to climb up trees and then fall down and get… all those injuries". Yet, as Amelia went on to say, clearfelling "just kills everything in the area" – it seemed that for many participants, clearfelling was not worth the environmental price.

> I'm not an expert, but clear-felling to me seems… a not very satisfactory way of gaining the timber, because everything gets felled, everything gets cleared. (Ken)

> [Clearfelling is] totally destructive … when clearfelling started, and that's about four decades or five decades ago. Up until then, the forests were selectively logged. Why, why - what is the matter with this? Why can't we do that now? Clearfelling is just mining. That's all it is, it's mining. It's awful. [laughs] (Reg)

> … clearfelling is very wasteful … why the hell can't we build a machine or series of machines that can selectively harvest individual trees? Now the flaw in that argument is that it's technically possible - the one difficulty is that by selectively harvesting the best trees, over time you may degrade the value of the forest … But on the other hand, it's probably a lesser evil than clearfelling. (Gordon)

The emotional responses that clearfelling elicited from some participants were striking. These recollections indicate that objections to clearfelling in Tasmania are not simply cognitive, but implicate emotional and empathetic response. This is particularly the case in the responses of those participants who described forests and forestry practices using the language of embodiment; see Banham 2020 (forthcoming) for a detailed discussion of clearfelling, embodied forest, empathy, and encountering the forest through ethical obligation.

> I don't know if you've ever gone to a clearfell, but it's like… it's murderous, it's horrible, they're shocking … I've had to go into clearfells for certain reasons, and they make me physically sick. I feel physically ill, and always get headaches when I go into them … I feel a sense of anger, a sense of despair.

> And, you know, actually a sense of hopelessness when I'm in that sort of space. (Catherine)

> [If I] go and stand in a logging coupe after it's been trashed, that's a pretty sorrowful thing. (Hugh)

> I had a niece who had cancer, and when she had chemotherapy, you lose all your eyebrows and your eyelashes. Just didn't look like her. Just didn't look like her, it just… and she was sick, and she looked sick … and so it's the same with clearfelling. It looks sick, it doesn't look well. And it's… it's just so clearly defined by getting rid of everything. And then you see those burning heaps, and you think - that's sick. (Diane)

Following from this condemnation of clearfelling, objections to woodchipping seemed to mostly reflect perceptions of it as a manifestation of the inherent wastefulness of clearfelling (although Alan was an exception here, as he advocated for practices such as woodchipping to make use of timber unsuitable for milling). Again, these worries seemed to involve more than just concerns about economic wastefulness. Rather, there seemed in participants' responses to be a sense that woodchipping is antithetical to their hopes for both future generations of Tasmanians, and the future of the forests themselves. As Ben put it, Tasmanian forests are "forests that deserve better than woodchipping and sending off for minimal prices".

> Ever since the advent of the woodchip industry, which was the beginning - well, largely the beginning of clearfell forestry techniques in Tassie … it was open-slather clearing of forests that should never have been cleared, and…

> sawlogs were going to the chipman[?], […] so they could put in a plantation. It borders on, on obscene, to actually do that. (James)

> So… you know, yes, forestry for building houses, building furniture, but not for woodchips. You know. And veneers… the high-quality stuff, and make people pay for it … the fact that it's just being turned into woodchips is just… it's just… it's criminal. (Diane)

> …so many timbers that are regarded as minor species have just been bulldozed and burnt. To the degree that there was that, you know, well-known adage that if you wanted to see the biggest rainforest in the Southern Hemisphere, you go to the Burnie wharf [in Tasmania's North-West] and have a look at it in a pile of chips. (Peter)

Concerns about woodchipping also clearly reflected participants' concerns about sustainability and resource management. This was evident in participants' suggestions of their preferred alternative practices: small-scale and selective logging; a focus on specialty timbers and artisanal production (such as furniture, wooden boats, and leatherwood honey); compliance with international expectations and regulatory standards (such as Forest Stewardship Council accreditation); and looking to elsewhere – particularly Europe – for examples of sustainable forestry management. This again reflects that participants' concerns about forestry practices in Tasmania are not concerns held in a social vacuum, but rather link to global-level concerns about degradation, sustainability, and loss. Concerns about forestry in Tasmania also directly reflected participants' views of Tasmania as a special, unique place on a global scale.

While these responses reflect the distrust and instability entrenched within participants' views of forestry in Tasmania, participants were not wholly negative about the industry. There was some recognition of the benefits of forestry for the state, such as the cultural contribution of artisanal timber products. Participants also paid Forestry Tasmania credit for the provision of services such as firefighting and road and track maintenance. Nearly two-thirds of participants expressed ambivalence about Forestry Tasmania (a trend I had not anticipated). This ambivalence tended to take one of two forms: comments to the effect of "I'm not against industry per se", and comments to the effect of "Tasmania needs some forestry industry, but…". As Ben quite poignantly put it, "I wish we had an industry we could be proud of, instead of one that I have no regard for". Examples of the former theme include:

> I think it's a really important industry to have, as long as it's plantation … I like having all the forests and stuff there, but I also understand that people need to work, and earn a living … I think if the forestry industry came back in, I guess became as big as they were before, [they should] concentrate more on plantation than logging old forests … [it] should definitely not be done the way it has been done in the past, with forestry having no consideration for anyone else. (Amelia)

> I don't have anything against logging per se … but it needs selective logging … you can pull out, uh, high-quality timbers, and that can be quite profitable, and can be quite safe … It just boggles my mind to see the clearfell and slash and burn. (George)

> I'm not against having a forest industry, I'm just against the forestry industry that we've had for the last 45 years. (James)

The following comments reflect the theme of "Tasmania needs some industry, but…". Each of these participants expressed some support for Tasmania's forestry industry, before qualifying this support with their concerns.

> I mean, you can't just leave everything alone, but… otherwise, human society would collapse. But I think, yeah. There shouldn't be any more than what there is. (Helen)

> Obviously you can't have 100% covered in [trees] … I don't know how low the percentage [of forest cover] should go, but I suspect it shouldn't go much lower than it is now. (Ken)

> You have to be practical, but at the same time, [forestry is] not an industry I like. (Lara)

> It's a very very complicated issue - it's complicated technically, it's complicated financially, and it's complicated morally and ethically … [Tasmanians] expect to have some kind of forestry activity as a part of the economy. But I don't like the old idea, which is going out of fashion, of clearfelling old-growth forest. (Don)

These ambivalent responses deeply undermine the notion that Tasmanians belong to one of two sides; clearly, it would be inaccurate to describe these participants as wholly 'for' or 'against' forestry. Participants very rarely called for the dismantling of the forestry industry,

and no participants advocated for unbridled forestry practices. This ambivalence therefore disrupts dominant and divisive narratives of forestry in Tasmania, and resists the reductionist and othering rhetoric of 'sides'. It also lends an air of possibility to compromise; just as when stakeholders established the TFA in 2013, participants' views of forestry suggest that a restructure of Tasmanian industry could hold broad appeal (and indeed, several participants mentioned their approval of the TFA). However – while this ambivalence is significant – it remains clear that while participants may not have been 'anti-forestry', they largely disapproved of Forestry Tasmania.

Forestry in Tasmania and ontological security

> If acts of communication - exchanges of gifts, challenges, or words - always bear within them a potential conflict, it is because they always contain the possibility of domination.
>
> Bourdieu (1994: 196)

The previous sections of this chapter have established two themes of participants' responses that are central to understanding their perception of forestry in the state. The first theme encompasses the feelings that participants expressed about Tasmania as a place of home and refuge. The second theme involves the acute concerns that participants held about global patterns of environmental degradation. Given these responses, it is notable (and quite understandable) that the dominant message of participants' perceptions of Tasmanian forestry is one of distrust: distrust of information, and deep distrust of politicians' and Forestry Tasmania's ability to effectively and sustainably manage the state's forests.

This distrust reflects power dynamics. The 'forestry elite' of Tasmania (and Australia) – those in positions to make decisions which have the potential to deleteriously impact upon the continued existence of Tasmanian forests - are evidently not beholden to respond to such distrust. This 'forestry elite' includes (particularly Liberal and Labor Party) politicians, and those in industry management positions (I do not include forestry workers within this assembly; while they may embody forestry work, forestry workers are not generally in positions of executive decision-making). I am aware that the participants of this study are more concerned with practices such as clearfelling and woodchipping than many Tasmanians may be; I do not claim that there is anything approaching state-wide opposition to the decisions of the forestry elite. My argument here, however, is that practices such as clearfelling are unquestionably destructive, and inflict losses that – to some, and certainly to the nonhumans in question – are irremediable.

It is important to recognise the power dynamics underlying these decisions and practices. Social inequalities, as shaped by power and political imbalances, have a long history of recognition within environmental sociology (Pellow & Brehm 2013: 237). In addition to this list of social inequalities, however, I propose a sense of existential and emotional vulnerability – that is, a recognition that the political and power dynamics which shape human-nonhuman interactions potentially threaten ontological security. I will explore this in further detail in Chapter 5. I argue throughout this thesis that all humans are inherently vulnerable but, in this Tasmanian case study, it is certainly arguable that those who care about Tasmania's forests are particularly vulnerable through their 'openness' to inflicted harm. The practices of the state's forestry industry have the potential to diminish these people's sense of ontological security by

damaging their sense of a 'good future', where this good future features intact forests and special places.

What is at stake here for these participants is a loss of that which symbolises both material constancy and the anticipated future. As Preston (2003: 100) argues:

> Statements about sense of place should be regarded as not just romantic yearnings but as statements that accurately reflect the fact that people craft some of their very cognitive identity in communion with a landscape. Loss of the character of a place should appear considerably more serious to people than is now generally appreciated … We should wonder less at the anger and confusion [that belongs] to cultures that destroy the places in which they live.

It is evident in participants' responses that for many of them, Tasmanian forests represent material constancy, providing a sense of home, belonging, and the material conditions that make Tasmania 'what it is'. Participants' ambivalence about the state's forestry industry – particularly the notion that 'we need some industry but…' – reflects this: forests, forestry, and (high-quality) forest products are a key component of Tasmania's materiality, and their wasteful mismanagement is a threat to this material constancy. The destruction of valued places is a more obvious link between concerns about forestry and threats to material constancy; as Peter put it, "every community has had its special place trashed by the woodchip industry". Insofar as these 'special' places contribute to a sense of ontological security as safe, familiar, home-like places, forestry practices have the potential to threaten ontological security.

Kidner's (2012: 232-233) argument that extractive industries contribute to a discontinuation between past, identity, and anticipated futures is particularly straightforward:

> [If] an area of grassland is plugged and planted with wheat, this disconnects it from its past history, giving it a meaning that can only be understood within a current, commercial context. The point is not just that changes have occurred in the landscape; but rather that long-term patterns of natural change that extended into the distant past and would have extended into the future have been uprooted, so that the meaning of the land is obliterated, ready for the imposition of a new, commercial meaning.

Kidner (2012: 233) goes on to argue that without this material and embodied connection to the past, individuals come to lack concern for the future and act only according to present needs. While this does echo many participants' concerns about Tasmania's forestry industry (that is, that immediate concerns dictate the forestry elite's decisions), these concerns also seemed to engender a 'fighting spirit' in participants to oppose this short-term thinking. Gordon, for example, protested that Malaysian logging company Ta Ann "is stealing future sawlogs from Tasmania. The whole industry is stealing from our kids". These concerns are not about Gordon's enjoyment now, but rather relate to a desire for a sustainable resource made available for the future. In this way, participants clearly linked the problems with current forestry practices and management with their concept of an ideal future. For Gordon (and others), this future is one in which the state's timber resources have been sustainably managed, so as to benefit "our kids"; many of the economic concerns of participants seemed to reflect similar worries for the prosperity of future generations of Tasmanians. A continuation of social division is clearly a threat to the state's future harmony, while the (potential and actual)

destruction of 'special' places is tantamount to the obliteration of an imagined future enjoyed in those spaces. Further, insofar as deforestation is related to climate change, forestry practices represent a possible threat to the future wellbeing of not only Tasmanians, but all humans.

Earlier in this chapter, I illustrated that many participants felt fortunate to be living in the state, and that they considered Tasmania to be a 'refuge'. This sense of escape and refuge related not only to participants' personal 'special places', but to the whole of Tasmania in a global context. The sense of comfort gained from this perception is inherently contingent, however, upon the sustainable management and/or perpetual protection of Tasmania's refuge-like qualities. Following the 2014 attempt to repeal the WHA status of 74,000 hectares of forest, Greens senator Christine Milne argued that such a move would destroy "Tasmania's clean, green and clever brand which is our main asset" (ABC 2014a). I do not disagree that this perception of Tasmania as a 'wild' refuge is critical to the state's economic and branding interests. However, I suggest that this sense of refuge also extends beyond such spheres of interest, and constitutes an important element of many Tasmanians' sense of existential wellbeing. As such, the actions of Tasmanian politicians and Forestry Tasmania – and the sense of distrust that participants have subsequently experienced – suggest that these forestry elites are actors with the ability to threaten participants' ontological security, through their ability to diminish the qualities of material constancy, safety and escape, and 'good' futures symbolised by Tasmanian forests.

Space

> [D]ifferent concepts of, and discourses around, culture and landscapes have material outcomes. They result in maps, fences, legislative and administrative instruments, gates, and boundaries. They keep some people in and some people out.
>
> (Head 2010: 432)

The final subject of this chapter is 'space'. This concerns the tensions that participants expressed about urban-forest boundaries and binaries in Tasmania, and subsequent questions about access – of forestry workers, and of everyday people, including the participants themselves – to these spaces. As previously discussed, 'wilderness' is a politically salient concept in Tasmania. Wilderness discourse is utilised in tourism campaigns, political rhetoric, and everyday conversations. Reflecting this, participants described certain areas of forest as 'pristine', 'unspoilt', 'untouched', or 'intact':

> I want it to stay unspoilt. (Ken)

> I like it to be that the ratio of pristine forest – so ones which are kept in National Parks – is maintained, compared to forestry ones… (Claire)

> … it's important to keep as much stuff that is untouched, untouched … I think protecting wild, wild areas, or prist- relatively pristine areas, are really really important. (Nick)

Participants also described Tasmanian forests as 'natural': spaces where humans are not present, and that humans cannot make themselves. Zoe stated this very explicitly: "[Forests

are] nature. Not man-made". While many participants spoke of 'wilderness', 'pristine' areas, and forest 'as it should be', some participants' responses also questioned the consistency and accuracy of wilderness ideals:

> … because of human intervention we don't have natural forests. But in Tasmania, we've probably got them about as natural as you can get. (Priscilla)

> I also think of the word 'pristine'. That might be tourism marketing coming out… (Amelia)

> … wilderness is not only forest and not all forest is wilderness, but there's a large overlap in Tasmania. (Hugh)

Regardless of whether participants accepted a label of 'wilderness' or 'pristineness' as accurate, a deciding factor in a forest being labelled as such seemed to be a matter of visibility. Here, 'visibility' refers to both whether a particular forest is remote (rendering it less visible to those living in urban areas), or whether human impact upon the ecosystem is difficult to detect (a variable that is highly dependent upon an individual's ecological or political knowledge, as discussed below). For example:

> [The forests] I've been able to venture into, are more intact than [others] … it felt like we were going into places that no one had ever ventured before. So you know, of course the Aboriginal people of Tassie I'm sure would have, but you still feel like you're going, 'wow, I'm in this place where maybe no one else has ever been'. (Catherine)

> … to me, when someone says 'forest' I do think of an original, untouched in inverted commas forest … But it's a forest that's associated with the wilderness concept, and it's out there, it's at a distance. So it's somewhere that you travel to. (Lara)

The value associated with old-growth forests reflects this notion of visibility. There was an interesting parallel in Daniel and Jack's views of 'old-growth' forest. Both argued that unlike many members of the public, they could detect less obvious human disturbance (see also Trigger 1999: 171):

> … It's always funny when you see the forestry signs on the side of the road, 'these forests were harvested 1850' or something like that - and if you didn't see that sign you'd look at it and just go, "wow, that's an old-growth forest". I think it does change people's perceptions, but if you were none the wiser…" (Daniel)

> A lot of the regrowth forest around the state - unless you know what you're looking for, you wouldn't know that they'd been forest before, only 150 years back, but if you do you can tell. (Jack)

These responses indicate that while wilderness ideals provide a convincing and provocative language – ideal shorthand for a certain type of valued forest – participants also recognised that this language can be potentially discordant with their observations. As Trudgill (2001: 105) puts it, "[w]ilderness is a concept as much as a place … [and] reserve management is much about expression of human preference". 'Wilderness' and 'intervention' are not fixed qualities. These tensions reflect the human-nature binary that has dominated Western reasoning: while

such thinking does not necessarily 'fit' with lived experiences, it is clearly still influential in many Tasmanians' assessments of the nonhuman.

Contrasts drawn between 'pristine' spaces and spaces in which humans have 'intervened' are fundamentally concerned with the demarcation of space. This refers to the supposition that something – be it humans or a nebulous sense of 'nature' – creates, designs, or designates certain spaces for certain purposes (see also Power [2009], for an insightful and relevant discussion of the demarcation of home and 'natural' spaces in Australia). I was surprised by the extent to which participants engaged in language about space, regularly referring to spatial elements such as 'interfaces', 'buffers', and 'edges', and drawing contrasts between urban and non-urban spaces, forests and plantations (as discussed above), and wilderness and non-wilderness forest (such as in Hugh's comment about wilderness above). This demarcation of space reinforces human-nature binaries.

By virtue of being the messy metaphorical act of passing through these conceptual boundaries, physical access to these places also reinforces human-nature binaries. Access to Tasmanian forests – including public access to roads maintained by Forestry Tasmania, and access to walking tracks – was an ambivalent topic for participants. Several described access in terms of how it benefited their own or others' lives, while a few participants described access as problematic, particularly in terms its effects upon forest conservation. This is a reasonable concern, as even seemingly innocuous walking and biking tracks can negatively impact upon ecosystems and species (Laurance & Salt 2018). Several participants identified both positive and negative aspects to public and/or industry forest access.

> [A problem is] conservation [movements] pushing a long-term agenda to reserve forest at any cost. And I think that impacts on a lot of people in our society and their enjoyment of the forest as well, because now there's a lot of areas where people can't do things. (Daniel)

> … one of the reasons for [Tasmania's proportionately high level of forest cover] is that the terrain is so difficult to get into, where some of these forests thrive … I try to weigh up and not be dismayed when they put a road through the Tarkine, for instance, I don't know if that's really good or bad. I notice it's open again. Sure, tourists need to make their way around comfortably, but what does that mean actually for ecology? Not sure. (Ken)

> We use a lot of forestry roads when we do the South West walking - I'd hate for that to be a bit compromised as well, if they started getting stupid and saying, like, 'sorry this is closed for bushwalkers now, you can't get to any of these tracks now' … that would be really bad. (Claire)

> In a funny sort of a way, I think it's good that access is difficult from a selfish point of view … it's sort of a little bit of an exclusive club, you know? But should it be that way? It's hard… (Henry)

The issue of access is complicated by the highly politicised nature of this issue in Tasmania. For example, as Claire's comment alludes to, public access to forests in Tasmania is in part determined by the reach and availability of State Government infrastructure. A further element of this politicisation is the use of access issues as governmental rhetoric. As discussed in Chapter 1, Tasmanian (particularly Liberal Party) politicians have wielded the rhetoric of 'locked

up' or 'opened up' forests to appeal to a voter base on the platform of being 'pro-forestry' and 'pro-development' (where a 'locked' forest is in reserve, but an 'open' forest is 'open for business'). As Wagner-Pacifici (2000: 128) points out, "forms of trespass and transgression" are dependent upon the existence of boundaries; drawing boundaries therefore has the power to criminalise previously lawful activities. The Liberal Government's anti-protest laws (mentioned in Chapter 1) are a powerful example of this. Closely related here is the concept of 'belonging'. According to Degnen (2016: 1651), belonging is:

> … contested terrain, and not always straightforwardly positive. The social and cultural dynamics of belonging mean that whilst claims to belonging can appear to be fixed, in actual practice and lived experience, belonging is often contingent, strategic and at times divisive.

Who belongs in which Tasmanian spaces – and according to whom – is a deeply political question. Matthew and Catherine both discussed the difficulties that the effectiveness of the 'locked up forest' rhetoric has posed for Tasmania's environmental movement. The responses of several other participants illustrated a mixed response to the terms 'locked' and 'opened':

> I wanna kind of keep it as it is now, and not have more of the locked-up forest opened for forestry. (Claire)

> We've got forests now - the word is now in the media, 'locked up'. [But] it's not locked up, it's reserved, sir. But no, it's 'locked up'! They use it, all politicians, they've 'locked up' the forest. (Jane)

> I don't think people on the mainland should have the say as to whether bits of Tasmania are sectioned off and not allowed to be touched … I think we

> should be able to make our own decisions about which parts of the forest are locked up … I think we need to stop just locking up every little piece of spare land. (Amelia)

Underlying Amelia's argument are links between access and power; while she insists that Tasmanians should be the ones to choose how the state's forests are managed, in reality only a select few individuals (essentially restricted to elected politicians and those involved in the forestry industry) are in a position to make such decisions. Complicating this issue of decision-making is the fact that political-conservation issues such as World Heritage Area rulings are necessarily transnational, and that Tasmania's international tourist numbers have increased in recent years (Tourism Tasmania 2018). Tasmania's current political climate presents further complexities, given that the state's incumbent Liberal Premier Will Hodgman has been vocal in his "vision to turn Tasmania into 'the eco-tourism capital of the world'" (Carlyon 2018). For the foreseeable future, this drive for eco-tourism will need to co-exist not only with the state's forestry industry, but the politicised demarcation of space that shapes Tasmania's forest ecosystems.

Further, access is a matter of 'competency'. Atkinson (2015: 139) explains that "[n]avigation is based on specific knowledge and competence that allows the social actor to make their way across and between spaces". While Atkinson is referring to the competency required to navigate social spaces, the act of bushwalking (or other forest activities) operates in a similar manner. To gain the benefits from access to forest spaces, an individual needs to be able to competently navigate both boundaries and space; they may need a Parks Pass (a paid annual pass to access Tasmania's national parks), the correct safety gear and clothing, a reliable mode

of transport, and the knowledge of where and how to access forest experiences. This matter of competency seems self-evident, but is an important (often socio-economic) factor in determining which Tasmanians are best able to engage with the state's forests. Pellow and Brehm (2013: 237) describe access to such areas as an 'environmental privilege' – that is, the ability to access:

> … coveted amenities, such as forests, parks, green space, healthy food, coastal properties, and elite neighborhoods. In our view, environmental privilege is the flip side and a source of environmental injustice/inequality. Thus, although many studies seek to document the distribution of environmental damage, the deeper distributional questions around where power resides and how privilege drives environmental injustice are only beginning to be explored.

I agree that this is an underexplored concept as it pertains to Tasmania, where political or economic interests largely dictate matters of access, with little recognition of the micro-scale actions that constitute this access. It is also clear that forest experiences in Tasmania are coming at increasingly high prices to tourists and locals alike, such as the new Three Capes Track (which, if undertaken using built accommodation, costs approximately $500 per adult). Given these contentions, participants' ambivalence about access makes sense. I suggest that individuals' connections with Tasmanian forests – and the perception of these spaces as 'unspoilt' – seem to clash problematically with political agendas, economic interests, conservationist values, and the practicalities of Western models of private and public property.

Returning to the underlying framework of the demarcation of space, participants commonly expressed concerns that the boundaries underpinning the issue of access are permeable and open to change. These boundaries include those delineating reserves and parks, urban/industrialised/developed areas, forestry operation 'zones', and abstract notions of 'pristine wilderness'. As with all aspects of decision-making about Tasmanian forests, the drawing and breaching of boundary-lines contains a dimension of power dynamics. As Ken astutely pointed out (see also McGaurr et al. 2014: 274):

> … the people who hold the power are able say, well good for jobs, we'll get in there and have a bit of that. If we take half of it, well, it still leaves half of Tasmania's forest. But you know, it wasn't that long ago that people said "no, there's no such place as the Tarkine. Doesn't exist. It's not on the map". [chuckles]

When discussing boundaries, participants very commonly referenced the perception of permeability. In doing so, participants used language that invoked ideas of proximity, buffers, expansion, movement, and human dominance:

> I hate the way that Forestry have continually tried to push the boundaries back in, and change… like, cut into boundaries that have already been set. (Jack)

> There's just some places that humans should stay out of. I think there's… we've taken over the world. (Helen)

> We've spent a lot of time opposing developments that we didn't really like in our neighbourhoods. Developments that basically chewed away, you

> know… that were part of the death by a thousand cuts of the local urban-bush interface. (Leon)

> I don't want people nibbling and nibbling and nibbling at the edges of these [National] Parks. I want as much park as possible. (Don)

> We should log a certain amount of native forest, in an appropriate way … But under no circumstances should you use that as an excuse to go beyond the boundaries that we've already logged. Like, you shouldn't use that as a Trojan horse to get into further native forest areas, World Heritage Areas, National Parks, reserves and so forth… (Peter)

As these comments demonstrate, participants used highly active language to describe the political processes they observed. In this was an indication that participants opposed the encroachment of the built environment upon the nonhuman, as a breaching of sacrosanct space. As West et al. (2006: 255) put it:

> Protected areas have increasingly become the means by which many people see, understand, experience, and use [the environment]. This … has imposed the European nature/culture dichotomy on places and people where the distinction between nature and culture did not previously exist (Strathern 1980). As such, protected areas have become a new cosmology of the natural – a way of seeing and being in the world that is now seen as just, moral, and right.

While West et al.'s (2006) concern is with the displacement of indigenous populations, their recognition of the power and value placed in the legal protection of space applies here. I suspect that the perceived permeability of those boundaries protecting certain areas from logging and degradation is therefore a source of concern for those participants (and Tasmanians) heavily invested in the conservation of forest spaces. The Federal Government's 2014 attempt to repeal the WHA status of 74,000 hectares of 'degraded' forests, for example, was a clear challenge to the permanence of such boundaries (Fairman & Keenan 2014), as is Will Hodgman's current advocacy for the 'rezoning' of reserve areas to facilitate tourism developments (Carlyon 2018). Participants' concerns about Forestry Tasmania's lack of transparency, alongside the precariousness of some protected areas due to their proximity to logged areas, seemed to also reflect these concerns:

> They must think people are dumb. They'd leave, you know, a hundred, two hundred metres of forest at the roadside, and then you'd go off a side road and it was just clearfell. (Diane)

> …at Fortescue [Bay], you walk around Canoe Bay and there's this beautiful rocky foreshore and there's forest and there's damp and there's moss, but on the map there's a hundred metres, maybe two hundred metres, to forestry operations and I'm kind of aware of that. (Ben)

Embedded in these concerns is the concept of cumulative effects. This is the notion that while authorities may approve a logging or mining proposal in isolation, the effects of this occurring multiple times 'adds up' to significant environmental degradation (Morton 2018a). Participants' concerns about the permeability of boundaries implicitly reflected fears about cumulative

effects, and the breakdown of interconnected tracts of forests. Writing about the literal standoffs of hostage situations, Wagner-Pacifici (2000) argues that the stakeholders of a conflict tend to interpret 'conflict spaces' differently. Wagner-Pacifici (2000: 98) writes:

> From the point of view of those inside the standoff center, the authorities circling and surrounding them are the incorrigibles. They may be characterized as heathens, as invaders of privacy, and as suppressors of liberty. They almost certainly always represent the hegemonic power of the state … the representatives of the legitimate state institutions view themselves quite differently. For them, outside the space of the standoff are the 'normals' – law abiders and law enforcers alike.

Assuming that those with conservationist sympathies align themselves with the space *within* a forest (that is, with the forest itself), it makes sense that they may view the permeability and/or purpose of boundaries very differently from more industry-minded Tasmanians. This accounts for some of the rifts, misunderstandings, and miscommunications regarding the demarcation of space within Tasmania.

Space and ontological security

'Space' relates to ontological security in a similar way as the other themes explored in this chapter. Just as forestry in Tasmania operates as a set of practices that potentially undermine aspects of ontological security (such as material constancy, Tasmania's status as a 'pristine' refuge, and imagined futures), participants' views of the permeability of the boundaries demarcating forest-related space in Tasmania echo the same concerns. The shifting of boundaries represents a particularly acute threat to the material constancy of these places

(Haynes 2006; Buckman 2008). Where the concept of boundaries may ostensibly work to demarcate certain (valued, 'special') areas as safe from logging, distrust in the permanence of these boundaries undermines this sense of security. Or, as Marie put it:

> [Forests] have to be protected not as a future resource that might be taken away again – i.e., the 375,000 acres, hectares, that [Guy Barnett] is looking at – they have to be protected in perpetuity. It's gotta mean something.

This does not contradict participants' views that Tasmania can, should, or needs to have some form of forestry industry. Rather, it reinforces the conceptualisation of space as demarcated (probably reflecting the influence of dominant Western ontologies). As Leon explained:

> I divide the world, if you like, into the built environment and the natural environment. And I realise that there's … an interface between the two.

The forest's symbolising of material constancy, escape and refuge, and the future contributes to a sense of ontological security. It seems that for participants, this is contingent upon the perception of that material space as demarcated, and therefore stable and reliable. The perception of permeable boundaries – representing a threat to this stability – is therefore a threat to ontological security. Similarly, material constancy is an essential element of special, familiar, 'pristine', or remembered places (also contributing to ontological security). In a Western context – in which access to space contends with politicisation, privatisation, and legality – permeable boundaries undermine trust in material constancy.

A more complex link between ontological security and issues of space lies in the sphere of self-narrative. For participants, an important aspect of establishing a consistent self-narrative

is in the ability to visit Tasmanian forests (as the following chapter explores). This process necessitates access to these areas. Therefore, while access to forest spaces may threaten valued qualities of 'pristineness' (as participants identified), a lack of access may impede the individual's ability to engage in a significant aspect of their self-narrative. Claire's comment above regarding her worries that Forestry Tasmania could rescind access to certain forests particularly reflects this, as does this story of Daniel's:

> [I] remember listening to [ABC Radio] one morning with the World Heritage areas extended, and up around Lake King William this old guy rang up and he said, and he was furious, and he would have been 70s or 80s, and he said, 'I've been camping up here with my dog and fishing ever since I was a little tacker and my parents before then, and now you're telling me I can't - well, why?' … [people] can't do their traditional activities of actually going out bush and bushwalking… it's had a really big impact.

There exists a tension, then, between the significance of accessing these forests, and the threat that access poses to the existence of these very same spaces. This perhaps accounts for the ambivalence of participants who see Tasmania's forests as 'pristine', but not truly; as rightfully accessible, but sometimes problematically accessible; and as protected by political boundaries, but threatened by the permeability of those boundaries. These ambivalences also indicate that different people do not necessarily construct or experience ontological security in the same way. For example, while Daniel decried a loss of access to forest spaces, Ben insisted that:

> … if I lost my legs and couldn't walk, it's not about me being able to experience [the forest]. I never lose that [wonder] at being able to, but it

> doesn't matter – [the forest is] still there, it still gives us all something that is hard to find. Yeah, it doesn't matter whether I get there, it's just a bonus that I can.

Ontological security is a personal, and personally subjunctive, experience. In the case of demarcated space – and Tasmanian forestry issues in general – this personal experience encounters a highly politicised framework. This framework is highly visible; the forest understandings and experiences of everyday Tasmanians, however, remain largely overlooked.

Conclusion

> [I]n Bristol, a row of street limes was to be cleared to make way for the development of a new Tesco supermarket. This threat to the trees prompted a 90-day protest, where a sustained presence was kept at the base of the trees and in the trees themselves … the trees were significant to local people; their meaning had a local dynamic, and they were obviously valued by those who were concerned with their felling. This concern appeared to enrol both broad disquiet over the destruction of natural habitats at whatever scale, and very specific disquiet over the destruction of particular trees which were regarded as palpable living individuals.
>
> Jones and Cloke (2002: 3)

This chapter has discussed the specifics of participants' forest definitions and 'special' places; participants' environmental concerns, and their opinions, experiences, and anxieties regarding forestry in Tasmania; and participants' views of the demarcation and permeability of space in the state. Broadly, participants' sense of ontological security seems diminished by their awareness of and concerns for environmental issues such as climate change and species

extinction. Unlike the participants of Norgaard's (2006) research, the participants of this study seem to engage only fairly implicitly in strategies of denial and self-protection; as such, their awareness of human (and nonhuman) precarity appears heightened by engagement with global and local flows of environmental concerns. It is this context in which concerns about Tasmanian forestry must be understood. The quote from Jones and Cloke (2002) above succinctly expresses the relationship between global concerns, local practices, and emotional experiences of precarity that has been at the core of this chapter.

Participants' perspectives regarding space in Tasmania presented much more ambivalently than their environmental concerns. In this sense, engagement with Tasmanian spaces and places has the capacity to both increase and decrease experiences of ontological security. I suspect this contrast between participants' environmental concerns and views of space and access exposes something of an experiential, practical divide. That is to say, global and local environmental concerns present a large-scale problem within which an individual can only 'do so much'; personal experience is much more explicitly embedded within issues of access to space and place, however. I would suggest that perhaps being 'closer' to an issue enhances its ability to ambivalently shape experiences of ontological security. The following chapter moves on from this focus on participants' understandings from spaces 'outside' the forest, to explore the elements of emotion, embodiment, relationship, identity, and ontology that participants have experienced with/in Tasmanian forests.

Chapter 5: In the Forest

The previous chapter discussed participants' understandings of Tasmanian forests. This chapter explores participants' experiences with/in forests: the relationships, emotions, routines, and embodied practices that have characterised participants' forest experiences. This chapter is loosely organised by temporality. The first section, 'Experience', discusses the ways that 'in the moment' experiences of Tasmanian forests inform ontological security. The second section, 'Self-narrative', explores the 'meso' temporal level of an individual's life span. The third section, 'Time and Being', discusses Tasmanian forests as symbolic of 'big picture' concepts such as the far past, the future, and existence and ontology. As in Chapter 4, this chapter opens with a context section, with the remainder of the chapter organised by theme. Each section begins by presenting the relevant research findings, followed by a discussion section explicitly illustrating how these findings reflect ontological security.

Context: Action

Of the 27 participants of this study, 25 discussed their experiences of bushwalking (hiking) in Tasmania. Gordon and Alan were the exceptions here, although even they made brief reference to recreational forest activities. Alan and his wife, for example, competed in orienteering when they were younger, while Gordon said that he:

> …walked into Lake Pedder a couple of times … Conquered the Frenchman [Frenchman's Cap]. Long, long time ago … But there's nothing environmental about it, it was just what people of my group did.

While I did not deliberately seek out bushwalkers when recruiting participants, the prevalence of bushwalking across the sample was unsurprising. Forests are salient and quite easily accessible in Tasmania (notwithstanding the limitations outlined in Chapter 4), and it is logical that those who enjoy spending time in forests would be inclined to respond to my call for participants. The trips that participants (and myself) described as 'bushwalking' varied significantly, from quick walks for exercise or stress relief, 'day walks' of several hours and overnight camping trips, through to tackling the Overland Track (a six-day, 65km hike). I felt that it was unnecessary to sharply distinguish between these various activities – by participants' own descriptions, all constitute 'forest experiences'. Perhaps the only significant difference between these experiences is in the degree of immersion offered by longer or more remote bushwalks, as I discuss in further detail below.

Participants generally bushwalked alone or with close friends and family. Several participants mentioned past experiences of travelling with a walking club, but there was a perception that walking in a group 'got in the way' of the desired experience:

> I used to go on a few walks with the Hobart social bushwalking club. I felt that they rushed to the end, and didn't take time… (Helen)

> I used to be president of a walking club, but they walk because they wanna walk, not because they wanna look at things. (George)

> I suspect that people who like really fast walking would get a bit frustrated with our pace … I like to stop and look at things. (Hugh)

Some participants qualified their experiences of bushwalking with disclaimers that they were not a 'serious' bushwalker. Leon, for example, said that he has "never really been what you call a, you know, a sort of marathon bushwalker"; similarly, Jane described herself as "just a little city girl. I don't go into the wilds, I don't walk for three days". I found these disclaimers curious, as they imply a sense of the 'ideal' bushwalker – perhaps a rugged adventurer, setting out on their own for days at a time. I suspect that the cultural origins of bushwalking (and similar activities) as a 'masculine' pursuit has influenced these perceptions somewhat (Lugg 2003; Wylie 2005; Harper 2015). As Tasmanian mountains rarely extend above the tree line, some participants also associated mountain-climbing with bushwalking and forest experiences. Perceptions of mountain-climbing had similarly masculine or competitive connotations. For example, Claire told me about her 'peak-bagger' friend:

> … a 'peak bagger' [is] what we call someone who is a bushwalker but they also have a bit of an agenda to be competitive with collecting points when they go to a certain peak above a certain height … I'm not into really the peak-bagging and that kind of thing. I do it for leisure.

While there remain undertones of masculinity and domination to forest experiences in Australia, the participants of this study seemed to embrace a gentler, slower approach to visiting Tasmanian forests.

Seven participants also spoke about enjoying activities such as kayaking and river rafting. Participants associated these activities with forest experiences, with the water-based activities providing alternative ways to see, sense, and access forest spaces.

> We also spent a Christmas in the Tarkine … we got to like, paddle kayaks through the forest there as well. (Priscilla)

> I'm a sea kayaker. So I can get to all kinds of remote places in a sea kayak, and then walk from there. (Don)

> [I've been rafting] down a few rivers … one of the longest, one of the best trips I've been on is from Scotts Peak Dam in Lake Pedder, down to Tahune Airwalk at Geeveston, down the Huon River … [we] went through some big long tracks of the river winding through buttongrass plains and dry eucalypt forest and quite a few trees and logs over the river here and there, and big gorge - this massive big gorge on the Huon. Amazing. (Jack)

Several participants also mentioned spending their time bird-watching. Sometimes participants described bird-watching as simply an extra element of a bushwalk, while others spoke about bird-watching as their primary motivation for visiting the forest. Considering bushwalking's masculine connotations, Jane's comment is thought-provoking:

> [Bird-watching is] the same meditational experience as painting. It gives me a reason to be outside. As a single woman, it is not acceptable for me to walk into a public space and sit down and just stand there. You know, somebody's going to honk their horn, do something … But bird-watching is your reason to be there.

The activities that participants have engaged in in Tasmanian forests – and the ways that they have done so – shape the experiences that this chapter explores. While this chapter mostly

discusses bushwalking, the term 'forest experiences' encompasses all these activities: short walks, long walks, mountain climbing, river rafting, bird-watching, and so on. It is contact with Tasmanian forests, in whatever capacity the participants wanted or were able to have.

Experience

This section explores several aspects of participants' immediate experiences of being in Tasmanian forests. These aspects involve the preparatory routines and cautionary behaviour that participants engaged in before and during their time in the forest; the emotional dimensions of forest experiences; the processes and measures by which participants experienced a sense of immersion within forests; and the links that participants drew between Tasmanian forests and a sense of wellbeing.

Preparation

Bushwalking is an inherently dangerous activity; injuries, adverse weather conditions, the loss of one's bearings, or a hostile encounter with a venomous snake are all situations that even the most experienced of bushwalkers could potentially face in Tasmania. Giddens (1991) describes reflexive self-narrative as taking place through the confrontation of 'acceptable' risks. As such, participants have implicitly accepted their forest experiences as 'worth it'; nonetheless, seeking out these forest encounters often took place through preparatory routines and a healthy dose of caution. When I asked participants about the routines and rituals they performed in relation to the forest, several participants told me about the protocols they followed before their visit:

> I always plan, and I always take all the safety gear. It's all a bit boring really, but it is part of the ritual. I have a particular bag, and there's a water bottle here and another… you know, it's all organised. And I've got a space blanket in case I get wet, you know, the whole thing. (Henry)

> Yeah, lots of planning. Lots of planning. So plan your route, look, pour over the maps. Get all your food organised, get all your clothes organised. Make certain everything is in waterproof bags. Pack your bag. And the last thing you do, the day before, is … sign in, and then sign out… my grandmother and grandfather always said you never go into the bush when it's windy, so I don't do that because it's just too unsafe. (Diane)

Several other participants also told me about their awareness of the forest's dangers, accompanied by stories of how to mitigate these dangers. These mitigation methods included measures such as having the right food and safety equipment, avoiding walking alone, and avoiding certain conditions (such as Diane's advice about staying home in high winds). There was a sense of reflexivity to participants' responses – that is, a sense that there is a right and a wrong way to confront these risks. Henry, for example, referred to "breaking all the rules" in walking by himself, particularly as he was "a bit older". While participants were aware and cautious – and cognizant of the 'right' things to do to alleviate these dangers – a few participants still told me about their 'near-misses'. Claire, for example, said that it was "lucky" nothing had gone wrong when she was on rural walks alone with her brother, while Henry glibly recounted needing to have his son rescued after he become lost. This seemed to me reflective of participants' acceptance of danger, in the sense that if something did go wrong, it was not the forest 'at fault'. Harries (2008: 486) argues a similar point, stating that his

participants considered flooding a more acceptable incursion on their lives than a burglary would be, as the "perceived moral neutrality of natural seems to render flooding more acceptable".

> I just accept the potential for there to be danger … [Forests] can be scary. And dark and wet, and when the wind blows, dangerous. But again … that's, I suppose, nature, isn't it? (Henry)

> I don't have a sense of the wildness being any sort of threat. Just the sense of my own infirmity, because I'm 72 years old and I have to be careful where I go. [laughs] (Leon)

> I feel safer there than I do anywhere. And I know that I shouldn't be there when it's really wet and windy and… but I somehow feel safe. (Catherine)

> My first time yes [I was uncomfortable], because I wasn't used to my hiking shoes, and it hurt me. And I was a little bit scared as well … But maybe because I've never done that kind of real hiking before, so that's why I felt that kind of things. (Lee)

Participants expressed a sense of their own precarity relative to the forest's power. Reflexivity, humour, and routine seemed to therefore operate not only as ways for participants to feel safe, but as ways to negotiate a trusting relationship with the forest. This is part of the function of routine and ritual. In his discussion about an extreme example of religious ritual (the worship of the deity Baphomet), Ezzy (2014: 12) explains that in ritual, "fear and repression are replaced by creativity, respect, exploration and perhaps indulgence … [where the symbol] draws

participants into new ways of relating to their fears". Forests present a space in which the vulnerability and mortality of humans is ever-present, but where people can – barring a serious incident – partially and safely confront this vulnerability (see also Trudgill 2001: 114-115). Catherine's comment above about feeling safe in forests reflects this process particularly strongly. Preparatory routines are also reminiscent of Giddens' (1991) notion of 'abstract systems' – systems of technology and expertise in which individuals place their trust to carry out the technical work of contemporary social life.

These findings stand in contrast to Kidner's (2012: 23) argument – coupled with his romantic notion of indigenous navigational practices – that:

> … navigational technologies, then, do not simply 'make it easier to get around'; they also undermine our sense of being located in a world … [and undermine] our 'ontological security'.

On the contrary, participants' preparatory routines demonstrate that use of navigational technologies (and other technologies such as emergency equipment and satellite information) do not undermine ontological security. Rather, these technologies allow contemporary, urbanised humans to engage with forests and other ecosystems in such ways that 'relocate' them in the world. Kidner's argument echoes Giddens' assumption (as previously discussed) that pre-contemporary routines that took place 'closer to nature' offered a greater sense of ontological security than those taking place in built environments. In contrast, I argue that contemporary, technologically-influenced ways of encountering the nonhuman instead simply offer different (rather than less effective) means of constructing ontological security.

Emotion

The experience of emotion is integral to ontological security (Giddens 1991). Emotion also shapes ongoing experiences and memory; as Milton (2002: 149) argues, "how we feel during an experience influences what we remember about it, and therefore how it affects our future thoughts, feelings and actions". Around two-thirds of participants explicitly identified emotional responses they had experienced in forest spaces, while several participants made comments that I interpreted as indicating emotional experience (such as "enjoying" being in the forest). The emotions that participants spoke of were both positive (such as joy, awe, and excitement), and negative (such as anger, grief, and despair), with the three dominant (and quite evenly represented) emotions being awe, joy, and despair.

Sociologists have offered myriad definitions of 'emotion' (Bericat 2016). Drawing on this, Bericat (2016: 493) defines emotion as "the bodily manifestation of the importance that an event in the natural or social world has for a subject [and is] a bodily consciousness that signals and indicates this importance". It is notable that this definition from Bericat implicates the nonhuman. While I acknowledge the significance of embodiment in experiences of emotion, in this thesis I primarily emphasise a social constructionist privileging of the social and cultural embeddedness of emotional response (Williams 2001; Head & Harada 2017). Bericat's (2016: 493) understanding of emotional response as an individual's embodied assessment of an event provides an ideal 'middle-ground' here.

Considering these complexities, I have interpreted descriptions of 'fascination' to be emotional experiences; when participants spoke about their fascination in the forest, they tended to

associate it with awe and joy. Hugh touched on this 'grey area' between emotion and cognitive evaluative response, but ultimately associated curiosity with feeling:

> [I feel] wonder. Joy. Curiosity - I mean, you could argue about whether they're emotions, but anyway. Feelings that I have - um… awe.

Alongside the recollection of specific events, I asked many participants about the emotions that they associated with Tasmanian forests as a whole. It was a pleasure to hear about the joyousness of participants' experiences:

> I'm aware of a lot of beauty, and a lot of newness, and a lot of life and growth and creativity and… calm. I find it really exciting and joyful. (Priscilla)

> I mean the temperate rainforest is - yeah… just so exciting … if there's someone with me I can get a bit excitable. Especially if I've got the grandkids. (Henry)

> I feel happy, I feel complete in these places. (Catherine)

These descriptions of joy and excitement constituted the 'lighter' side of participants' positive experiences. Awe, on the other hand, seemed to be a positive experience grounded in gravitas; what Nicholsen (2002: 16) describes as the "not simply unspoken [but] speechless … sense of an encounter with some presence larger than ourselves".

> [The feeling is] one of absolute awe, really. It's awe, it's response to majesty, response to extraordinary light that penetrates down … it's just awe and joy and delight. (Ken)

> And just in a bit of awe and wonder of the place, as well. (Jack)

> I suppose when I have been closer to that in the South-West, there's something very primal, and something immense about those places … in terms of the power, emotionally. (Ben)

Joy, excitement, and awe each seemed to express participants' respect for the forest, and their celebration of interacting with these places. I suspect that joy and excitement operate as a form of escapism, in which participants happily engaged with forests as a diversion from the pressures and normality of everyday life. Similarly, awe 'sits outside' of everyday experience; participants' awe seemed to be a form of response to a sense of something 'bigger' than humans, and a reaction to the profundity of interaction with these spaces. I felt this particularly in the case of Daniel who, despite his expressed commitment to reason and politics, could not help but feel awe-struck:

> I try not to let emotion get into it, although one can't not be emotional going out there, surrounded by giant trees - it's pretty awe-inspiring.

As Hugh did above, joy, fascination, and awe can be summarised as 'wonder'. Ahmed (2004: 179-181), writing about being and becoming a feminist, describes wonder as a transformative and empowering experience. She argues:

> Wonder is the pre-condition of the exposure of the subject to the world: we wonder when we are moved by that which we face … wonder, as an affective relation to the world, is about seeing the world that one faces and is faced with 'as if' for the first time … To see the world as if for the first time is to notice that which is there, is made, has arrived, or is extraordinary. Wonder is about learning to see the world as something that does not have to be,

> and as something that came to be, over time, and with work … Wonder energises the hope of transformation, and the will for politics.

Similarly, Nicholsen (2002: 17) argues that "[w]hile awe stops us in our tracks, this is not the end of our experiencing but rather a beginning". In Ahmed's (2004) argument about feminism, I see parallels with coming to be a lover of the forest. In recounting their experiences of positive emotional in-forest experiences, I do not think participants were simply telling me that they had fun (although there is also significance in such experiences). Rather, I see stories of encountering the world – not just the forest, but the world of humans and nonhumans at large – in new, empowering, humbling, and joyous ways.

Participants also spoke of experiencing negative emotions within forests. These negative emotions were almost always associated with the witnessing of environmental degradation, including fire damage and clearfelling.

> All around Mt. Dundas there's beautiful King Billy pine trees. But you go down a bit further where there's been a bit of a fire and it's just dead, King Billies, because they'll never grow again. Never grow again … yeah. Breaks your heart. Breaks your heart to see that, you know - what did those trees ever do to us? Yeah. It really does, and I… you know, it's a scar … Yeah, it does, it hurts. (Diane)

> So, going through a clearfell… well I spend most of my time in tears … and I get very angry, in clearfells. So I feel a sense of anger, a sense of despair. And, you know, actually a sense of hopelessness when I'm in that sort of

> space. And funnily enough, I feel a little bit similar when I'm in [a plantation] … I get really pissed off with that, because I know what's been there. (Catherine)
>
> It probably would [upset me] if I saw Forestry just like, cutting down tree after tree after tree after tree. I think that would upset me. I wouldn't be able to say why but yeah, it would. (Zoe)

These accounts reflect the same concerns about forestry practices discussed in Chapter 4. This emphasises that attitudes to forestry in Tasmania are not simply a matter of cognitive understandings, interests, or politics; rather, many Tasmanians respond to these practices in deeply emotional ways. These experiences of hurt, anger, hopelessness, and upset are reflective of grief, and indicate a form of attachment to forests and trees not unlike the attachment one feels to loved ones, pets, or a home (Cianchi 2015). This is the 'punch in the gut', to paraphrase Henry, at losing something of value.

These concepts of 'forest grief' and vulnerability expose the power dynamics which structure that vulnerability. Whose and which reactions to forest degradation are valid, and who is in a position to make the decisions which directly precipitate that degradation? In Tasmania, it is often not those who care for forests that are making these decisions. As Vail (1999: 11-12) argues, "[c]orporation directors may find it convenient, if not relatively painless, to countenance … the ecological insecurity that occurs when their production processes indiscriminately poison the air or waters of local or even distant communities". While Milton (2002: 150; emphasis added) suggests that a "nature lover might feel more strongly about the preservation of a mountain than a developer feels about the proposed quarry that threatens

it, *or vice versa*", the loss of something that is materially irreplaceable – such as a forest or special place – must surely underscore a particularly acute experience of grief. As Beresford (2015) reports, the loss of livelihood (such as in the collapse of Gunns Ltd.) can also induce feelings of loss and fear for the future – but, again, this is an experience structured by power dynamics, as it is the disempowered worker who faces the biggest disruption to their lives in such a scenario. In these scenarios, it is not likely to be those in positions of decision-making who suffer.

Where dominant discourses position economic interests and instrumental relationships with the nonhuman as 'reasonable' – and position emotion as "'beneath' the faculties of thought and reason" (Ahmed 2004: 3) – the emotional responses of participants present an undervalued counter-discourse. While I take exception to her reiteration of environmental conflict as a matter of 'sides', I agree with Milton's (2002: 4) argument that:

> There is a strong convention in western culture that emotion is opposed to thought, or at least that it impedes rational thought [and this] convention features prominently in public discourses around nature protection … Usually, though not always, it is nature protectionists who are accused, often by commercial developers or politicians, of being too emotional in their attitudes to nature. Whenever I have encountered such accusations they have struck me as being, themselves, irrational or unreasonable. They seem to imply that commitments to some things, like trees, landscapes and non-human animals, are emotional, while commitments to other things, like

> profit and progress, are rational. I have often suspected that this distinction between different kinds of commitment is logically unsound…

Milton's provocative statement echoes Krien's (2012: 279) question: "For an issue [politicians and industry figures] say is purely economic, why does it seem so *emotional*?"

Further, those who grieve for forests are not often able to effectively counter the cause of their grief. There is the possibility of protest; however, as Matthew's story of the Franklin River blockade shows, even successful campaigns can feel like a losing battle:

> We were watching forests being destroyed … [it felt] sickening. You went through periods of just feeling helpless … sometimes you'd have to fight off a sense of fatalism, or a sense of pessimism, that actually, no, nothing's gonna stop this … it was difficult to avoid feelings of, um, despair sometimes … we read the commentary that the High Court was very likely to rule in favour of saving the [Franklin] River, but that didn't mean anything really. You know, you'd feel a bit comforted, but you still had the sense of dread that maybe they wouldn't.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, vulnerability is the state of being open to possible hurt (Ahmed 2004). As these stories show, the decisions of the forestry elite are able to hurt these participants, through their grief for lost places, and through 'anticipatory grief' (Cunsolo Willox 2012; see also Head & Harada 2017; Cunsolo & Ellis 2018); as Krien (2012: 274) eloquently puts it, "the feeling of theft and betrayal [extends] so much further than the fluoro-ribboned tags outlining the logging coupe". As such, the precariousness of Tasmanian forests positions those

who care and grieve as less powerful than those who do not care, yet this is underacknowledged. Cunsolo Willox (2012: 151) argues that "[e]nvironmentally-based grief needs to continue to be spoken loudly and often, in private and public settings" to bring about what Head (2016: 33) describes as a "we-ness" founded on "collective grieving [that] can bring people together, provide comfort, [and] expose relational ties [that] include humble recognition of the many non-humans on whom our own lives are dependent". On a theoretical level, this recognition of power dynamics also contributes an "integration between … micro- and macro-perspectives" often lacking in sociological studies of emotion (Bericat 2016: 505; see also Lively 2017).

However, not every participant related to forest experiences as emotional experiences. As I mentioned above, Gordon dismissed the significance of his earlier bushwalking, stating that "there's nothing environmental about it, it was just what people of my group did". George told me that when in the forest he does not "have a huge number of endorphins that float round my system. They're probably there but I don't realise. I do enjoy it, because I do it all the time". Similarly, Matthew said:

> it's not like you're experiencing, you know, great highs of emotion or ecstasy - although it can be that a particular sunset or a particular view or achievement or rafting of a particular rapid, or having clambered up a rock-face can suddenly give you a great rush of a sense of achievement…

Yet it is Matthew's Franklin River story above that is so full of impactful statements about helplessness and dread. I am not suggesting that Matthew and George are misrepresenting their emotional experiences; rather, it may be the case that the emotional qualities of forest

experiences can be hard to identify, let alone express. This may have been particularly so for male participants, given the associations between femininity and emotional expression in Western societies (Ahmed 2004).

Finally, a story that Marie told me stood out as quite different from other participants' descriptions of emotional experiences. Partly, it struck me as very poignant:

> Both my mum and dad have passed away, and my brother, who also loved the bush - they've all passed away, so there's that connection personally with them. I can feel them in me when I go there. If that's something I want to connect with, I find it really easy to connect there.

Marie was also describing her strategic management of emotions; she could connect to her loved ones if she wished, but to do so would expose her to an emotional (and perhaps difficult) experience. This has echoes of Norgaard's (2006) argument that individuals engage in emotional norms as a means of managing ecologically-induced vulnerability (see also Head & Harada 2017). Emotion is not always easy to identify or express, and – while deeply personal – is also socially, culturally, and politically structured (Bericat 2016). The emotional dimension of these recollections suggests that forest experiences are profound, and have the ability to shape the innermost elements of Tasmanians' lives.

Immersion and intimacy

I often asked participants for details about what they liked to do in forests, and many of the actions and routines described seemed to be strategies aimed (consciously or not) at getting as close to (or as 'in' to) the forest as possible. Forest experiences are embodied experiences,

and engaging with the senses was part of how participants immersed themselves Examples of this included appreciating birdsong and the forest's ambient sounds; enjoying the scents of the forest, particularly the smell of eucalyptus leaves; relishing the 'fresh air' that is unique to forest spaces; and appreciating the forest's aesthetics (with 19 participants mentioning the 'beauty' and/or the colours of Tasmanian forests). Participants used their bodies to 'take in' the forest; as Catherine put it, "I do hug trees, and I let them hug me".

Participants seemed concerned with 'making the most' of the time they had in the forest, and employed a number of 'tactics' to achieve this. These included walking slowly, and taking time to observe small details; walking alone, or only with friends and family; establishing an objective for a bushwalk, such as reaching a certain site; and taking care while walking not to trip or acquire an injury. While these tactics may seem mundane, they contributed to an overall sense that participants took their forest experiences seriously, as these small actions facilitated a sense of immersion. This immersion functioned to create relationships between participants and forests, by fostering a sense of intimacy.

> [I liked] just the, I suppose, the… feeling of, of nature, just being enveloped by nature. (Peter)

> I just want to feel everything, I want to feel it, I want it to feel me, I want to be part of it, I suppose. (Catherine)

Participants' endeavours to nurture this sense of intimacy seemed based on two strategies: making an effort, and overcoming distance. 'Making an effort' refers to the ways that

participants went out of their way – physically and mentally – to embrace what the forest has to offer:

> I'm surprised about how many people, um, don't care very much about the landscape. They'll look at it on pictures and things, look out the window, but not prepared to make much effort about it. And you have to make a bit of effort. (Don)

> It's really quite… intimate, being right in a forest, in a temperate forest, because it's affecting how you move about. And there's so many inputs… I mean, I get down on my hands and knees and crawl around… (Henry)

> [Before seeking mental health care] I could not be by myself … It took a lot of I guess psychology to actually be able to go out and enjoy nature like that, and not always having to be like, listening to music or texting. And now I wouldn't give it up for anything. (Zoe)

More common was the strategy of achieving intimacy with the forest through overcoming distance. 'Distance' can refer to a lack of physical proximity, as Hugh's comment suggests:

> I loved the Tasman Coastal Trail when we walked that a few years ago. I… don't know that I want to go back and walk it again, now that's been turned into a bloody highway … We went to Shipstern Bluff a couple of months ago. And they're doing the same thing to that track, and it's… it's so sad, because it was a beautiful walking track in there, and they're just turning it into a really wide, really easy track to walk. Which is obviously more accessible for

> inexperienced walking … but it takes away so much of the charm of walking close to the vegetation … [they have] made the track much less intimate.

'Distance' may also refer to a lack of relational proximity. For example, seeking privacy seemed to be an important element of the forest experience:

> [I like bushwalking as a way to] get away from people … It did feel like my own space… (Helen)

> I haven't done any of the major walks. But it is on the cards. But for me, I also like the solitude, so probably the Overland track where you're bumping into people all the time [appeals less]. (Daniel)

Similarly, walking along or in silence – to avoid distraction from the forest – also functioned to overcome distance between participants and the forest:

> Quite often I have time on my own for an hour or so on these trips. Set the guests off in front a bit and drop off the back and have a bit of a break … it's sometimes a bit noisy and all that, we stop them before we enter this rainforest, and we set them off one by one. And we make them keep a bit of distance, and that way they all get to experience being on their own out in that environment … If you're with a few people, you miss quite a bit, I think. (Jack)

> I like getting away by myself like that on short walks, and I always have, even when I was a kid. Just go up in the hills behind the house and be by myself. (Leon)

Referring to whale-watching tourism, Milstein (2008) discusses the significance of silence as a tool in facilitating connection with the nonhuman. Observing a group of whale-watchers rendered silent by their experience, Milstein (2008: 180-181) suggests that "collective silence may allow for the expression of and immersion in the spiritual", going on to describe her own experience in watching whales:

> While I felt a pressing need to verbally share the experience, I also directly experienced a sense of loss after speaking. My words did not do justice to my feelings at that moment. In fact, the words I chose encapsulated the moment in partial meaning, situating the whales as separate visual objects instead of as connected somehow, as I had felt, in a more expansive and meaningful co-presence.

Barring specific moments (such as an animal encounter or sunset view), forest experiences do not tend to have quite the same sense of transience as an activity such as whale-watching does. Yet there is a parallel between participants' responses and Milstein's argument that silence, meaningful collectivity, and being 'in the moment' fosters a sense of intimacy with the nonhuman that can be 'broken' by the intrusion of that which was not part of the experience.

Milstein (2008) also discusses a different form of non-communication: speechlessness, or the sense that 'there are no words' to express the experience of connecting to the nonhuman. This argument clarifies what is particularly significant about participants' fostering of intimacy: that such behaviour echoes the belief that 'you have to see it to get it'. This refers to the perception that other people will experience a change – of emotions, values, or priorities – when or if they experience intimacy with the forest:

> I think forests would be appreciated by most people, I imagine, if they had the opportunity to be in them… (Henry)

> You must have that same sort of feeling … it's just awe and joy and delight. Probably the same as you'd feel … it's those natural places that I particularly value, just like you would, or anyone would really. (Ken)

> Until people go and experience these areas themselves and actually be there, evoke all their senses and feel what it's like… they might care about it, but they don't have that passion. And I think after people go through these areas, they care so much more about them. (Jack)

> I think because a lot of people have access to bush or forest here, in their view, or where they've chosen to live. That it becomes very important to them. (Marie)

Echoing these beliefs is Milstein's (2008: 184) observation that "wildlife, nature, and ecotourism endeavors" are built upon the confidence that "people exposed to certain living elements or places in nature will feel a connection, that this connection will lead them to want to learn, and, in turn, to protect that animal, plant, or place, and its ecosystem". Similarly, Krien (2012: 56) suggests that:

> The risk … is in *seeing* a place. Which is perhaps why in the early '80s the prime minister, Bob Hawke, vehemently rejected an invitation to walk through the state's forests with the Greens leader Bob Brown. 'I've seen what happened to Richardson,' he said, referring to his environment minister,

> Graham Richardson, who became an advocate for forests after a day spent in the wilderness with Brown. 'I'm not going near those forests with you.'

While this notion holds doubtless appeal for conservation movements, I agree with Milstein (2008: 184) that theorists (and conservationists or tourism operators) should not uncritically accept the notion that "charismatic aspects of nature 'speak for themselves'"; certainly, I do not think that the process of transformation that participants believed in is universal (particularly as responses to the nonhuman vary widely across history and cultures, as previously discussed). Experiences and strategies of immersion and intimacy did, however, seem to give participants a way to not only enjoy their relationship with the forest, but a way to share it with others. The ideal of others' transformation upon seeing the forest also likely provides a sense of comfort, in much the same way as the 'education as inoculation' strategy I discussed in Chapter 4 does.

Strategies of immersion and intimacy facilitated participants' relationships with Tasmanian forests, but these strategies do not indicate the nature of that relationship. As described in Chapter 2, these relationships may be anthropocentric, ecocentric, or somewhere in between (or perhaps neither). There are various ways to conceptualise these relationships. One is through the consideration of nonhuman agency (as discussed in Chapter 1), as immersion and intimacy may 'open' an individual up to be shaped by relationship with the forest (Singh 2013). Another may be through a Levinasian-style ethical response, in which the forest presents as the 'face' of the other to whom an individual feels an ethical obligation (Ezzy 2004; Banham 2020, forthcoming). Regardless of how and why they occur, immersion and intimacy inform

ontological understandings by way of establishing relationship between the individual and the nonhuman. Hugh argued that:

> … you don't need to take a utilitarian view and say, 'a place is only valuable if people go to visit it. And we need wheelchair access or four-wheel drive access into this heart of the World Heritage Area'. People need real contact with real nature, but they need it on nature's terms.

In this way, participants regularly framed Tasmanian forests not as anthropomorphised, but as an object/subject that they could 'get to know'. In building this intimacy, participants located themselves in the world as human. For Hugh, this happened in deference to the nonhumans' 'terms'. To others, this relationship may take very different forms.

Wellbeing

The previous sections have detailed the strategic and emotional aspects of participants' 'immediate' forest experiences. The most common framing of these experiences, however, was through the concept of wellbeing. Participants discussed forest experiences as being good for them, both as a necessary 'time out' from everyday life, and as a contributor to living well. Most participants described forests as providing time away from everyday life, while over a third of participants spoke about forests as a contributor to human wellbeing. Usually participants referred to general/mental (rather than physical) wellbeing, although six participants also described bushwalking as a good exercise routine (and often better than visiting a gym).

For those who described forests as providing time or space away from everyday life, it seemed to be a crucial aspect of why those participants valued Tasmanian forests in the first place. Participants described forests as peaceful, tranquil places, and somewhere to go for rejuvenation and replenishment:

> [I enjoy] escaping from daily life … I generally find it quite peaceful. And stress-free … [Being in the forest is] different to my everyday life. De-stressing. (Helen)

> [After visiting Cradle Mountain] you come back energised, you come back ready for what's ahead. (Ken)

> I try and get out into the forest at least every fortnight, because if I don't… I actually, the forest actually just regenerates me. It makes me feel better. So as often as I can, I get out. (Catherine)

> It feels relaxing, and um… to go, yeah, just to find yourself out there is just empowering, relaxing, serene, tranquil, pristine … you feel, I think, a bit recharged and revived after going out there. (Claire)

Several participants described forests as a place in which to gain perspective, or even as a place in which to experience a sense of meditation (see also Nicholsen 2002: 20).

> If I feel a bit overwhelmed or something, it gives me a sense of perspective that I'm… it gives me a sense of perspective about, oh well look, you know, this is a big world, there's that big world out there … sometimes I just feel things falling into place, in terms of what I might need to do to address a

> problem. I don't actually need to think it out sometimes, I can just let the peace of the bush come to me, and it all sort of falls into place. (Marie)
>
> [Being in the forest] makes me… I would say probably a lot more mindful, just like… yeah. It makes me think about more important things than everything I do at [work] … you think about the bigger picture and put things into perspective. (Amelia)
>
> [Being in the forest is] a real calm a real high … I suspect it's a feeling that it's not unlike a feeling people get when they're meditating. (Lara)
>
> … often I have a week or so in the city, and I just crave getting out a bit. So it's really important to me to have that space and time to think, a bit of quiet, a bit of solitude, to help gain greater perspective on everything else. (Jack)

Participants experienced these feeling of relaxation, rejuvenation, and perspective due to forests providing the time and space to 'get away' from what Zoe called "the hectic bullshit of life". The pressures of daily life in the built environment that participants described seemed oriented around surveillance and obligations, particularly in the form of technologies that demand constant communication, engagement, and exertion. In this way – as with attempts to immerse oneself in the forest – privacy and distance seemed to be important aspects of gaining wellbeing from forest experiences.

> There's so much over-stimulation I guess in society these days, with all the technology and all the chemicals and everything all around you, in everything we do, and everything we wear … [when you go out into the bush]

> the rest of it's forgotten, and you just … everything else drops away and I love that. (Jack)

> Going out into a landscape that's not altered other than a couple of tracks and markers and things, and going, 'well this is so different and contrasting to what our everyday is, going into work, into the city'. And it's just so much more relaxing, and free. (Claire)

> [In the forest] you're not being constantly distracted, your attention span is not being fragmented by the ephemera of emails, social media, other forms of media, and the stimuli that sort of tend to dominate life in society at the moment … it gives you the ability to reflect, or to think creatively, or to have insights that you wouldn't otherwise get in the sort of chopped up, slivers of time that you get when your life is dominated by electronic telecommunications … I think that's why people feel restored, or they regain a sense of sanity or perspective or wellbeing when they visit natural places. (Matthew)

The implication of this process if that there is something 'wrong' – that is, unhealthy, demanding, or 'unnatural' – about everyday life in the built environment. As such, forests function as a space in which to escape these forms of surveillance and pressure. As Diane put it:

> [In forests] you can switch off, and you can just be in your own head … You can breathe, you can feel … You can be yourself. You don't have to worry about anything else. I suppose it's in some respects very primeval, isn't it?

> You just, you know… you're just there … it's like, if it's really really noisy in a restaurant, and there's so much going on, I can't taste my food properly. So if you're in a big city or where there's lots of things happening, you can't… you can't think clearly. Whereas if you go out in nature, whether it's a forest or on a beach when there's not a lot of people, or whatever, and think.

As such, participants implied – or at times, outright stated – that contact with the nonhuman is something that is inherently 'good' for humans. In this vein, participants conceptualised the forest as a space of wellbeing, in terms of mental, spiritual, or simply general health:

> I see it as really important to be able to kind of self-medicate via the environment. (Priscilla)

> If we can live with nature and look after it and be guardians of it … perhaps we can live a fuller, better life … You actually get uplifted by going into these types of forests. (Catherine)

> I think that it does people good, and there are a lot of studies out there to say how important it is for us to go out and be out in the bush, or be somewhere natural. It's good for our mind, body and spirit … natural things give us, give most people, a feedback. (Marie)

> [In the forest I feel] this kind of energy and connection that makes me feel so strong and powerful. (Lee)

> I think it's incredibly important for human wellbeing - human mental wellbeing, mental, spiritual, whatever you want to call it - wellbeing, to have that contact with real nature. (Hugh)

These responses reflect many of the popular and academic discourses linking human wellbeing and exposure to the nonhuman (as discussed in Chapter 2). It is possible that awareness of these discourses prompted participants to relate to forests in this way, but this does not diminish the rejuvenating power that participants perceived Tasmanian forests to have. A further interesting element of participants' associations between forests and wellbeing was the presence of routine and ritual. As mentioned above, Catherine told me that she tries to visit forests every fortnight; similarly, Jack described his weekend routine of running in the forest to avoid feeling 'stir-crazy', while Claire said that "if I want to do something on the weekend that relaxes me, I'll [go bushwalking]".

Beyond these routinised experiences, there also seemed to be a pattern to participants' bushwalking that mirrored the archetypal 'cleansing' ritual (Atkinson 2015). Participants often described everyday life in the built environment as hectic, wearing, and built on surveillance and obligation. Following the recognition of these pressures, they would go to the forest, and after the visit, they would return to 'normal life' feeling replenished:

> In my lab sometimes I deal with five decimal places, so you deal with remembering seven numbers. And so sometimes, if I am stressed out or whatever, sometimes I go 'okay I need my book right nearby so I can write that straight away'. And then, I find if I go on a bushwalk I can remember all those numbers and walk right to the other end of the room. And I just feel

> so much more chill, and just like, not on-edge but you know, a lot more relaxed about just working, even. (Claire)

> We all live in big city, with the skyscraper and shopping centres and cafes and restaurants … whereas forests - it's just trees and nature and forest. So maybe that changes our mind and mentality, because we don't see it every day … [if] you take the weekend or one day to do something different. And then when you go back to your habit[s], you feel more productive, or efficient. (Lee)

> If things are perhaps a bit overwhelming, or there's too much washing up or whatever… I can go out and I can just go to our little bit of bush right near us, and I just have a few minutes or half an hour or whatever, and I can come back, and I've got a perspective on things. (Marie)

Whether through offering a space to get away, or through feeding a sense of wellbeing, many participants seemed to heavily emphasise how forests contributed to their sense of 'living well'. This forest 'benefit' is contingent upon the sequestration of the nonhuman in Western society. This separation of forests and contemporary urban life, however, may also threaten forest spaces through apathy or lack of awareness. This sense of wellbeing – and the tension between intimacy and distance – is of particular interest in Tasmania's political climate of forestry, ecotourism, and ecocentric place branding. Developments in and/or near reserve boundaries – such as the recent Lake Malbena development proposal, mentioned earlier – highlight these tensions. The Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) (2018: 2) – an environmental legal service operating in Tasmania – argues that the helicopter flights associated with the Lake Malbena

tender threaten a disruption to "Time Remoteness (an analogue for 'away from it all / sense of isolation)" (see also Baker 2018a). The EDO (2018: 3-4) states that:

> … current recreational users highly value the isolation they experience in the area of the proposal, a 'sense of getting away from it all' that they fear will be damaged by overflights – not just from the immediate intrusion of noise, but the intrusion into the sense of remoteness. This impact on time remoteness has not been adequately quantified or analysed in the referral or additional information.

These objections clearly echo the values and concerns of the participants in this study, and indicate that locating this sense of wellbeing in Tasmanian forests is a potentially precarious act. Although I find the concept of quantifying an inherently experiential process such as 'time remoteness' slightly problematic, I agree with the EDO's argument that proposals for development must take into account a broader understanding of what forest experiences provide for Tasmanians.

Forest experience and ontological security

This section has examined aspects of participants' forest experiences which may seem banal, insignificant, or simply self-evident – aspects such as preparatory routines and emotions, or walking slowly, silently, or walking 'just because'. Yet in these actions are layers of meaning through which participants built particular forms of relationships with forests, shaping important aspects of their lives.

The routine actions that participants put into place (or at least thought that they should) when preparing to visit a forest – putting on shoes, packing a bag, or informing a friend – contribute to their feeling safe in a space where the nonhuman is more powerful than the individual. None of these routines related to establishing dominance over the forest or modifying the forest to better suit human frailties. Rather, participants' routines concerned what they could do to be and feel safer, resulting in the cultivation of a productive – even trusting – relationship with the forest. The performance of routine is a fundamental aspect of Giddens' (1991) ontological security, and I agree with the significance he places on routine as a way that individuals develop a perception of the world as safe and familiar. Participants' preparatory routines not only facilitated their forest experiences by making these experiences (seem) safe, but also enabled participants to develop a sense of trust in their interactions with the nonhuman in general.

A sense of wonder, like routine, helped participants to develop a relationship with the forest. To loosely paraphrase Ahmed (2004), wonder allowed participants to see the nonhuman in powerfully new ways. The concept of wonder underscores the significance of participants' joy and awe; while valuable experiences in their own right, these experiences of wonder are also indicative of a reshaping of human-nonhuman relations. When participants encountered Tasmanian forests with wonder, they were engaging with something 'bigger than themselves' (Nicholsen 2002). In this way, where the forest acts as symbolic of the nonhuman – as something to encounter and engage with, with respect and awe – it also acts as a way for humans to know themselves in relation to the nonhuman. Wonder, by virtue of being the experience of these ontological understandings, therefore informs a sense of ontological

security. By Ahmed's (2004) definition, wonder is also a highly temporal experience, informing a particular (transformative) engagement with what has been, and what is yet to possibly be. Wonder is a political engagement with many of the same processes that ontological security is.

The grief that participants described – underlying their recollections of anger, sadness, and despair in the face of loss – was also necessarily temporal. Grief is also fundamentally about human vulnerability. Participants expressed anger and sadness towards the loss of forest as it was or could be, rendering the forest a powerful symbol of what the future may hold. If the continuation of a valued object or subject contributes to a sense of ontological security, then the loss of these valued (even loved) forests is certainly a challenge to that ontological security. When it came to specific, valued places – places that participants had come to know personally – the destruction of these forests (such as through clearfelling) was also a diminishment of the sense of ontological security gained from familiarity with the forest's materiality.

Like wonder, the strategies that participants performed to nurture a sense of immersion in forest spaces is a performance of human-nonhuman relationship. Immersion facilitates a sense of intimacy; immersion and intimacy are both spatial experiences through which one locates oneself in relation to another. This intimacy is a particular feeling and a particular experience of being a human in relation to the nonhuman. By locating the individual and informing a sense of what it means to be human, immersion and intimacy facilitate the construction of ontological security. I suspect that immersion is also an important aspect of seeking wellbeing through forest experiences, in that it facilitates a 'total' experience which gets the participant

as far away from the contemporary world as possible. Wellbeing was an extremely common concept for participants to relate their forest experiences to, depicting these experiences as a form of escape, and forests as a place of refuge. I suspect that the Tasmanian context of this study contributed to the prevalence of wellbeing in participants' responses, given the salience of 'wilderness' discourse in and about the state.

Escape and refuge are important aspects of ontological security, in the sense that they are means by which an individual may feel safe and in control. Where participants' preparatory routines facilitated an engagement with forest spaces, the theme of wellbeing shows that the routines 'worked': the escape to a safe and healthy refuge was complete. As Dupuis and Thorns (1998, in Dupuis 2012: 158) suggest, part of ontological security is engagement with a space that allows a person to "do their own thing". Participants' responses about escape, privacy, and gaining perspective echoed this need; as Diane put it, in a forest "you can be". Gaining a sense of wellbeing from forest experiences is an enhancement of ontological security, by being an engagement with a place of escape and refuge. I suspect that the experience of gaining perspective – 'zooming out' from the immediate pressures of everyday life, to see the 'bigger picture' – is also indicative of the forest's role as a contextualising agent of nonhuman life and ontology. The final section of this chapter will explore this theme in further detail.

In valuing the perceived health benefits of forest experiences, participants also engaged in a ritual-like 'cleansing' from the stress induced by contemporary, urban life. As Don succinctly described, forest experiences are "spiritually refreshing"; by interacting with the forest, participants seemed to return to their everyday lives feeling replenished. The forest is therefore

symbolic of this cleansing ritual, with participants rendering Tasmanian forests as representative of the safe and healthful transition to a 'better' way of living. By being the place that symbolises this ritual, Tasmanian forests contribute to participants' ontological security.

Self-narrative

> When you give yourself to places, they give you yourself back; the more one comes to know them, the more one seeds them with the invisible crop of memories and associations that will be waiting for you when you come back, while new places offer up new thoughts, new possibilities.
>
> Solnit (2001: 13)

Where the previous section discussed the 'immediate' aspects of forest experiences, this section explores the ongoing story forged through repeat visits, memories, family connections, and the marking of personal time. In Chapter 2, I outlined Giddens' 'self-narrative' as a particular conceptualisation of self-identity in the contemporary world. The major elements of self-narrative – an internal biography delineated by life passages, reflexivity, trajectory from past to future, and the demarcation of personal time – were extremely common elements of participants' forest experiences. Kidner (2012: 232) argues that while memory is often categorised as a "cognitive function, it is of course also an embodied quality"; as such, visiting a forest and engaging with its materiality can form a powerful connection between one's past, present, and possible future.

Participants marked personal time through forest experiences. For older participants especially, bushwalking and forest experiences had been a long-term feature of their lives (although some

younger participants had also been bushwalking for a proportionately long time). These memories often harked back to childhood:

> I remember as a kid – I grew up in country New South Wales, and we all had motorbikes as kids and our backyard bordered on the [state forest], and we had like 100,000 hectares and you'd just go bush … I've always liked being out in the bush and nature. (Daniel)

> I've always walked. Even since… ever since I was a kid … So it's something I've always done, and enjoyed. So I just… I don't know. Maybe it's just in the, in the psyche. [laughs] (James)

> I remember going walking with Dad when I was about six or seven years old in the Grampians in Victoria, and just really took to it. You know, almost without thinking about it, it just felt good and right. (Matthew)

Participants' forest experiences often continued from childhood – from the places they experienced with parents and siblings – into future environmentalist work, or simply into walking with their own children and grandchildren.

> I look at my narrative … things develop and change. [It] started with my dad, when I was a little girl and he loved native Australian plants … So I see that that connection with nature sort of started there. And then I think then, because of that I always loved to be around big trees. (Catherine)

> Mum and Dad loved the South-West mostly, so yeah, we went and spent a lot of time out round there … we grew up soaking up the environment, I guess … I'd like [my daughter to as well], if she wants to. (Marie)

In both Catherine and Marie's comments, there is a clear sense of the importance of materiality – a connection to places and species which contribute to a sense of home and connection. As Ken put it:

> I think seeds were sown very early on for me. So this is why I feel very attached to the idea that nothing detrimental should happen to Tasmania's unique resource, the forests.

For a few participants, childhood experiences even influenced their choice to move to Tasmania:

> When I was a kid I grew up, I spent a lot of time walking around in the hills. So it was only a couple of blocks up to the 'bush', as it were … [that sense of isolation] was something I really valued. Where we live now is [near a reserve] and it's on, if you like, the 'urban-bush interface'. And it's one the reasons, it's one of the things that brought me to Hobart, really … All of a sudden it was sort of like, 'oh my god, I can see the edge of the world again!' (Leon)

> I've been interested in forests in Tasmania for a long time, and wilderness in general ... I'd been a couple of times as a child. My dad took me to Lake Pedder just before it got flooded, and we also went to Cradle Mountain … it's always been a place that I've loved at a distance. And then the

> opportunity came up to come down here and I thought, 'yep! Why not?'
>
> (Hugh)

The link between forest and self-narrative concerns attachment to place and space. A further important element, however, is the connection between people (usually family, but also friends) facilitated by forest experiences. Degnen (2016: 1649) argues that not only do people become attached to places, but that place "also works to tie individuals to each other"; similarly, Svarstad (2010: 105) suggests that "[hiking] provides opportunities for people to create a sense of continuity and belonging in their own lives and with their close family". These human-human experiences of the forest clearly draw a thread from an individual's past to their present and future.

Participants also discussed bushwalking as a marker of personal time and their own life stages (analogous to Giddens' [1991] 'life passages'), ordering events that were particular to the themselves such as work, injuries, or retirement. For example, participants described walking more or less at different times of their lives – a pattern that was generally contingent on external conditions such as study, employment, and family obligations. These considerations extended to participants' understandings of what their future might look like, too; for example, Don, Reg, and Diane – each approaching retirement – all described an anticipated future in which they looked forward to bushwalking more regularly. What I find interesting here is that participants used bushwalking as a way to not only mark these life stages, but to also understand, experience, and negotiate life stages. Establishing an internal biography requires a method of contextualising time – as influenced by external factors – in a personal way, and bushwalking appeared as a common means for participants to achieve this.

The life trajectory also involves aging, and the accompanying embodied experiences of getting older. Unsurprisingly, given the older skew of the study's sample, aging was a common concern when it came to participants' bushwalking experiences.

> I'm getting on a bit, just to do the circuit of fourteen kilometres is… [laughs] that's probably one of the aims! (Ken)

> I'm 72 years old and I have to be careful where I go. [laughs] … and I can't climb as well as I did, I'm just not as mobile as I was. (Leon)

> I'm getting a little too old I think to do Federation Peak… most of the walks [that I do] have got existing tracks. (George)

The acknowledgement of aging made by these participants reflects a sense of reflexive embodiment. Giddens' concern with reflexivity is rooted in his assertion that it is a significant (and significantly novel) aspect of living a contemporary life. Further, Giddens also argues that a key part of self-narrative is the confrontation of acceptable risks, which requires reflexive engagement with possibilities of harm (and participants' assessments bushwalking's risks and benefits, discussed above, reflect this process). As such, participants' acknowledgements of the difficulties of being an older bushwalker were not simply mundane or flippant observations of the inevitability of aging (although the presence of humour in the above comments does suggest a certain distancing of oneself from the negative aspects of aging). Rather, making concessions for aging – that is, bushwalking differently, but bushwalking nevertheless – operated as a form of negotiation between the known past, the embodied present, and the future's predicted trajectory. Svarstad (2010: 104) supports this association between identity

and trajectory, suggesting that "hiking provides a sense of continuity not only in a long-ago, historic perspective but also [in an individual's life]".

It is evident that forest experiences work to order personal time and events; for participants, bushwalking (and other forest experiences) acted as a 'frame' through which to express self-narrative. Forest experiences also acted as an intermediary between external time – rhythms and cycles common to all humans – and the 'personal time' of the individual. At any given moment individuals are operating at the "intersection of many different kinds of time" (Wagner-Pacifici 2000: 61), yet the establishment of a consistent self-narrative requires some form of 'personalising' multiplicitous experiences of temporality. In much the same way as calendrical rituals such as Christmas mark annual time, participants used forest experiences to observe and experience external time in the context of their self-narrative. This was particularly evident through repeat (often annual) trips to Tasmanian forests, and through bearing witness to seasonal cycles and change.

> Different spots are good at different times of the year, like… this time of the year, you're in the Spring … out looking for spring flowering orchids, so a lot of those are in coastal heath-y type vegetation. But in the Autumn, we go looking for fungi… (James)

> My wife and I go to Cradle Mountain every year, not Easter but around that time … for the last three years we've done it. And I don't see any time… any reason to ease off, we look forward to it very much. (Ken)

A particularly Tasmanian example of this process is travelling to see the blooming of the *Nothofagus gunnii*, colloquially known as the Fagus. The Fagus is Tasmania's only deciduous native tree, which blooms with bright orange leaves around Easter every year. As Marie described:

> Most years we go [to see the Fagus] … we like to. Because it's a seasonal show, I suppose. So yeah, I guess one of our routines would be - according to the seasons, certain things are happening. So we like to go and see those things, and be a part of those things, in that season.

While these descriptions of repeat and ritualised forest experiences connote a sense of sameness, cycles, and familiarity, seven participants discussed their repeat trips in terms of the forest being 'different every time'. Participants described these changes as a valued aspect of their forest experiences.

> If I find something, I do go back again and again, and I never regret the next time because there's always a newness, even to something that you remember. (Priscilla)

> You learn something new every trip … I've been 30 times on the Overland [Track] in the last five years and still, you learn something new, see it all in a different light every time. (Jack)

> The thing I like about bush is it's completely random, it's not predictable and it's always changing. (Lara)

This does not contradict the above recollections of familiarity and cycles, and nor does it undermine the concept of bushwalking contributing to a stable self-narrative. Rather, for these participants, change seemed to operate as a form of familiarity; it was by immersing themselves in these spaces over multiple years that these participants were able to really know the forest (and mark their personal time by it). Participants then incorporated these changes into their internal biographies, as seen in comments such as James':

> Over time you build up knowledge of Australian plants. And it's something you build on all the time. You never stop learning, every time you go out in the field you learn something … we always say, doesn't matter where we walk, doesn't matter how often we've been there, we always find something really interesting … it's something I've done all my life.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Giddens' conceptualisation of ontological security (and, therefore, of self-narrative) is overly conservative. However, as these responses reflect, sometimes change is good, productive, or comforting.

Self-narrative and ontological security

Participants engaged with their own self-narratives through experiencing Tasmanian forests, and this happened primarily through two temporal 'modes': personal time (memories, belonging, life stages, and trajectory), and external time (seasons, cycles, and 'species time'). The link between ontological security and this element of forest experiences is self-evident: most participants related to Tasmanian forests in ways that significantly informed their sense of a coherent and stable self-narrative, facilitating their movement through a predictable world, from a familiar past and into an anticipated future.

Of all the incredible stories that participants told me about their lives, this poignant account of Leon's particularly struck me. In this passage, Leon makes clear associations between forest materiality, his first home in Idaho, his family relationships and emotional experiences thereof, and his adopted home of Australia:

> When I was growing up, every comic book I read, you'd open it up - the trees were always green, you know. Big, fluffy, green trees. And that's how Tasmanian trees and Australian trees generally are. They're big and fluffy and green, and I remember… my dad died the first year that I came [to Australia]. I came here in September, and he died in December and I went back, I was back for a month. And of course, you know, in 1600 metres above sea-level on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains in January, it's cold and snowy and grey, and there are leaves on the evergreens but all of the deciduous trees, there's nothing on them. And it was absolutely… absolutely bare. And of course there was all the grief tied into that as well. And so you come back, you come back to Sydney, and all of a sudden it's like you've been dropped into a comic book. [laughs] Yeah… it took some years, really, to get used to just the green, if you like. Because if you grow up some place where in the Autumn the trees change colour … in some ways, the forest here is more boring than the forest in Idaho… but really, it's different. It's not… it has other charms. So it's like, well that was my first life you know, just have to get on with life now.

This story underscores the importance of forest materiality in experiences of home, belonging, and life trajectory. In forests, one might see their memories and experiences symbolised (as Leon did in the green trees of his childhood, and the bare trees of his grief). Similarly, the ways that individuals face material conditions – that is, the way that an individual incorporates material conditions into their life, whether through relocating (as Leon did), retirement, aging, or raising children – reflect the forest's role as symbolic of a knowable self-trajectory.

The second of these temporal modes is external time, particularly in terms of how participants incorporate the passing and rhythms of external time into the self-narrative. In relation to forests, participants primarily achieved this by way of repeat trips that (sometimes explicitly) marked various aspects of external time: years, seasons, cycles, and the inevitable changes of nonhuman life. Repeat trips are reflective of routine or ritual; for example, Marie described her trips to see the Fagus as a 'routine'. Referring specifically to rituals associated with food production, Barry (2012: 111-112) argues that such rituals:

> … evoke a different temporal pace and rhythm which is in direct opposition to the '24/7/365' industrialized version of time in modernity. Whether at the scale of 'ecological time' … 'biological time' … or 'political time' … this focus on rituals and ceremonials stands … in an attitude of resistance to the homogenizing discipline of administered time organized around efficiency, productivity, and maximization.

Despite the risk of romanticizing the significance of 'natural' rituals over those conducted in built environments (as discussed in Chapter 2), I similarly argue that participants' engagement with external time through their forest experiences worked as a resistance to other, more

demanding forms of time observance (and this is reflected in the earlier discussion of participants' perceptions of wellbeing). This is significant in the cultivation of a sense of ontological security. Not only did participants' forest experiences provide them with a means to incorporate external time into the stable self-narrative, but participants seemed to do this on their own terms. Participants' forest experiences balanced constancy and change, predictability and surprise, and the self and others. While the future is not truly knowable, the role of forests in establishing a stable self-narrative created a space through which participants could experience a sense of ontological security.

Time and Being

> This sense of the specialness or privileged nature of all that exists means that 'the environment' or the 'world at large' is experienced not as a mere backdrop against which our privileged egos and those identities with which they are most concerned play themselves out, but rather as just as much an expression of the manifesting of Being (that is, of existence per se) as we ourselves are.
>
> Fox (1995: 251)

The two previous sections have endeavoured to understand participants' forest experiences through two scales of time: immediate experiences and the individual's life span. It was, however, extremely common for participants to also allude to the connections between Tasmanian forests and a sense of time which far surpasses the individual: from the distant past of human origins, to the future generations that will exist in many years to come. These time scales – alongside spatial and conceptual elements that are far 'bigger' than the individual –

can be difficult for people to conceive of, communicate, or engage with meaningfully. This section explores the ways that forest experiences operate as a means of framing one's position within this 'bigger-than-human' network – what Plumwood (2001: 28) describes as the "larger sphere which takes in but greatly exceeds the human" – and as a means of comprehending the possible future. While I had anticipated participants speaking of their relationships with the nonhuman (whether broadly anthropocentric or ecocentric in nature), I had not anticipated the extent to which participants would express these ontological understandings through the notion of 'something bigger'. As the remainder of this chapter illustrates, Fox's quote above seems rather apt for the participants of this study.

Time

> When forestry experts speak about their practices, they do not describe the forestry world in a neutral way, but continuously produce social reality and social order. New management practices creating different temporalities produce new categories to be accepted by forest owners … what kind of other versions of reality could be possible and what other meanings can be given to temporal aspects in private forestry?
>
> Jokinen and Holma (2001: 342-357)

While Jokinen and Holma's quote above refers to a context of the management and practices of private forests, their work illustrates the temporal dimensions embedded in interpretations of forests, and the role of these temporalities in shaping a forest's' valuation and materiality. The language of temporality also shapes the interpretations and management of Tasmanian forests, and participants' responses reflected this process.

A large majority of participants referred in some way to the long-term time scales represented by forests or trees. Some participants, for example, described a past 'made visible' by the age of the forests that are still standing:

> You know, Captain Cook wasn't even born when [these trees were] coming up out of the forest … it's 500 years old, it's… what was happening 500 years ago? Shakespeare was … You know, *that* sort of thing! It's still there. I can stand under a tree, look up - wow! This has been here for that long. (Ken)

> … these things have been around before… before modern Australia was colonised … and they'll be there for millenia to come. (Daniel)

> They're so ancient, they're so quiet, they've seen so much … You lie under an old myrtle and you just go, 'wow - so what have you seen in your lifetime?' Shitloads more than me. (Catherine)

> We went all the way through that sort of big area of reserve on South Bruny [Island] … that is probably my favourite walk anywhere … everything's so old. And so you get that sense of, like, you can feel that it's, there's, things have happened there. (Zoe)

The concept of the 'ancient forest' holds political currency in Tasmania, particularly insofar as it works to galvanise conservation efforts. Participants' references to 'ancientness' indicated that not only do Tasmanian forests inform a sense of state or colonial identity – as in Ken and Daniel's quotes – but that forests and trees can offer a sense of 'wisdom' or experience that

people cannot possess themselves. The age of forests acted as a grounding mechanism that makes the past 'knowable':

> Old-growth forest should remain, because its value is in that it has survived … Even if it might tell more of a story if you cut it through its trunk so you can count the rings [laughs] - just leave it there, where it is! … It's important to have survivors, because they are the history of what was. (Jane)

As discussed in Chapter 1, 'old-growth' forest is a contentious topic in Tasmania. While a few participants did acknowledge that definitions of old-growth can be ambiguous – such Peter's comment that "largely undisturbed forest that hasn't been logged or burnt for 80 years is just an arbitrary sort of a definition, and most forest communities contain some old-growth" – the use of 'old-growth' as a label is an obvious appeal to the value of 'ancientness'.

> [Logging old-growth] seems as blatantly silly an idea as turning the top of Mt. Wellington into a quarry for rocks for the roads that we build, and just like blasting off the top of the mountain and carrying it away in trucks. (Jack)

> Because old-growth has taken so much longer to get to that point … I do think it's worse [if it is logged]. I mean, if you kill a three-year-old tree, you can replant it and it'll be like it was in three years. But if you log a 150-year-old gum… it's never, like, you're never going to be able to see it there again … I don't know what the impact is on the environment, but I'm more sad about that. (Zoe)

Cianchi (2015: 95) succinctly explains that old-growth forest "may be several centuries old compared to which the human span is so small … recognition of the power, the scale and the

complexity of ecosystems such as forests and oceans can give rise to new understandings of [one's] place in nature". Forests are a very tangible way of knowing that the material world will continue. Further, ancientness is not static. Rather, the age of forest also acted as a frame for participants to think about the long-term future in a concrete way.

> These places should be left alone, because in 10,000 years they could still be there. Obviously I won't be, we won't be, but perhaps… I don't know how things will change. (Leon)

> I've actually got photos of me working with bulldozers, cutting tracks through rainforest, which is a bit serious … suddenly you realise you're doing damage, and it takes… for some forests, aww… a thousand years to come back to where it was. Other, average fast-growing forests, are probably about 180 to 200, 300 years, um, before they actually mature. And you think, 'aww, yeah okay … cut a tree down but it has an enormous effect'. (George)

> [Smoko Creek] used to be just a most beautiful, beautiful rainforest that they just, you know, ruthlessly trashed, along with a lot of the other places around there. And it takes generations to recover, you know, you're talking - you wipe out a 400-year-old forest, 400-year-old trees - well you're not gonna see the forest, anything like it, for another 400 years, at least. (Peter)

As discussed in Chapter 4, participants' environmental concerns largely focused on the tensions that arise when short-term consumption and desire threaten the long-term potential of ecosystems. Several participants, for example, identified the need for 'long-term thinking'

in managing and protecting forests, and the threat to Tasmanian forests posed by short-term thinking (as encapsulated by electoral cycles and economic models; see also Head [2016: 47]):

> We chop, we clearfell a whole great big giant forest, which took millions and millions of years to evolve and thousands of years to get the way it was … it'll come good in a thousand years if you leave it alone. But we never… it's a crop, so it's going to be harvested within twenty or thirty years … it's good for human economy, in the short-term, but we're gonna do ourselves out of business in the long-term and in the meantime we're fucking things up… (Don)

> But whole environments and ecosystems can't be suddenly reproduced. You know, it's a little bit like processes that are causing climate change - fossil fuels are the outcome of coal and oil that are the sort of sequestered mass of carbon, that's been accumulated over hundreds of millions of years. And we go and put it all into the atmosphere over the course of a hundred years, like [clicks fingers] in the twinkling of an eye … and seeing the destruction of the forests is one way of appreciating that in just one, one view, just one look. (Matthew)

These responses conceptualise forest conservation as a means of 'protecting' the past time encapsulated by ecosystems. However, even those participants who were less critical of forestry practices in a general sense – particularly Daniel, Gordon, and Alan – emphasised the importance of taking time frames into consideration in processes of decision-making:

> [There is a] generational time-frame involved in growing trees. Like, it takes time, it's not a crop that you can just… two years later you've got it. Although plantations, you're talking about 15-20 years. But it's still a long-term investment for not only time and money, but mentally. (Daniel)

> [If] it's a slow-growing tree, we have to look at a four-hundred-year period … If you want to have something running in perpetuity, you've got to think in perpetuity. It's like killing the goose that laid the golden egg - you take the money for five years or ten years and then what do you do? (Gordon)

While the appeal of 'ancient forests' may be most closely associated with conservation movements, these comments demonstrate that temporal considerations and sustainability concerns can act as a point of similarity between Tasmanians with differing interests.

Most participants discussed what I have termed 'future narratives': the stories told about the planet's environmental future. The concept of future generations (often grandchildren specifically) was a discursive device used to voice these views. Usually, participants' future narratives contained concerns and desires to conserve forests (and other ecosystems) for the sake of future generations' ability to live well.

> I feel embarrassed, I suppose, with the legacy that we're leaving for our grandkids. Because I think we've made a bloody mess of things, over all. And continue to do so. (James)

> I don't like the old idea, which is going out of fashion, of clearfelling old-growth forest, because we just… once again, it's a lovely repository of lovely things for our kids and our kids' kids, and our kids' kids' kids. (Don)

> The window of opportunity is now, because I just reckon your generation, and your kids, will be going, 'what were we thinking? What were we thinking?' you know. [Clearfelling] will be seen as a crime against humanity, I am absolutely sure… (Catherine)

Many of these future narratives were quite pessimistic. While Jack, Catherine, Marie, and Don offered some semblance of optimism, other participants' narratives were ambivalent, expressing a sense that humans' treatment of the nonhuman is improving, but not quickly or drastically enough. Beyond this, participants' narratives were negative in tone:

> So a lot of things that are sort of being fought for now are going to be lost over the next century … a lot of the natural values that people have fought for are going to be washed away in the climate change. (Nick)

> I'm very cynical about the future of the human race, to be honest, if you wanna go that deep … I don't hold much future for the human race, to be honest … I haven't got grandchildren yet, and I'm rather happy about that. No I'm serious, I just don't think it'll be a very pleasant world. (George)

However, one theme emerged over the course of the interviews that added a layer of complexity to this pessimism. Where appropriate, I began to ask participants whether

conservation matters if the planet's environmental future is bleak. According to participants, the answer seemed to be that it is our human duty to continue the 'battle':

> Well done to the people trying to save the penguins and the Orange-Bellied Parrot and all that … it's those little achievements that make us fine, in my opinion. Our saving grace, as a creature. (Jane)

> You do what you can. You don't put your gun down simply because it looks like the enemy is going to run you over. You keep shooting. (Leon)

> It's kind of like when you go on a diet or something, and then you have two pieces of chocolate and then you're like, 'well fuck, I've already had two pieces of chocolate I might as well eat three blocks'. Same thing … If we all died out tomorrow, then I don't know whether or not the Earth would recover, or if it would just keep on in this greenhouse effect. But I would like to hope it would recover. (Zoe)

Head (2016: 6) argues for the need for "symbols and themes that allow us to work towards possible futures as well as acknowledge a grieved-for past". Ecosystems such as forests – representative of material constancy, the future, and the fates of precarious species – may operate as such a symbol.

Ontology

Participants also used the forest to frame ontological understandings: understandings of what it means to be, and to be human. This took place primarily through three themes: evolution;

being a 'part of something', and/or a 'part of something bigger'; and forests as epitomising the complexity and vitality of life.

Approximately one-third of participants expressed the idea that there is an intimate link between human evolution and the nonhuman (including forests). The implication here tended to be that there is something within 'human nature' that forest experiences allow people to better access or understand:

> Well, yeah, originally [it was our home] but we've for the most part - apart from some indigenous populations around the world - for the most part we've moved away from forests in the modern world. (Jack)

> We come from the landscape, we used to find our food in the landscape … It's deeply ingrained in our past. And I know we're a species which is omnivorous and can live in all kinds of situations, but you've still got that old evolutionary history. You come from, you know, the forests and the surrounding open spaces, where you get your food from. (Don)

> So, we might just fade back into the forest, I don't know. But it would be nice if there was a forest left to fade back into. Put it that way. If we're lucky we fade back into the forest. (Leon)

These comments depict forests as analogous to a hometown – that is, somewhere where an individual may return 'to their roots'. In this way, narratives of evolution portray the forest (alongside other ecosystems) as a symbolic and material representation of belonging, and a way of being that is 'original', 'authentic', or 'right'. This reflects the argument I made in Chapter

2 that ontological understandings are similar to (or are a 'human-wide' version of) personal heritage; to locate oneself via the nonhuman is to create a narrative of where humans come from and may yet go.

Similarly, many participants discussed forest interactions as a means of seeing the bigger 'network' that humans are a part of. These participants described experiences of feeling like they were 'a part of something', and that this 'something' is so big, it envelops any individual life.

> [Being in the forest] makes me feel like I'm part of a really… a really grounded part of what's happening in the world, because I'm in this place. I'm in this place where all this is happening and I'm part of it, you know. And I understand what's, to some extent what's going on around me. (Henry)

> If we're not here then life goes on without us, and it goes on in such ramified and subtle ways that we still don't understand, really, in so many respects … it's been running itself, the planet's been running itself for the last 3 billion years, you know. It doesn't really need us. (Leon)

> So we're just an organism that is part of that other, part of the forest. (Diane)

> [Being in the forest] really makes you think about different things, about life, existence. (Daniel)

> … it is feeling alive again. And I feel that every time I go in the ocean, as well … [you are] sort of in something that's larger than yourself … you probably sort of become part of something bigger than yourself. (Nick)

Participants described this aspect of forest experiences using the language of humility. As Reg put it, "why should human beings assume that we are the pinnacle of creation? [Nothing] could be further from the truth". Some participants experienced their forest interactions as a feeling of 'smallness' and precariousness:

> [In forests] you have to adapt to what's around you, and have a realisation of how small you are. (Henry)

> [Visiting the Blue Mountains] … there's nothing in there except trees, and all of a sudden, just feel… I mean, you realise you're on this cliff face and you're really… you amount to absolutely nothing. (Leon)

> I just find that very humbling, to think, you know, there's a whole lot of creatures extremely adept at living in that environment - we have no regard for them. And I would die … if I got lost down there, I would die. How long would it take me to die? I couldn't do it, I couldn't get out. (Jane)

Drawing on social theorist Thomas Homer-Dixon, Barry (2012: 62) argues that contemporary society's undervaluing and dismissal of self-sufficiency and survival skills – where having others provide such services is a "central [feature] of the modern 'good life'" – reflects the complexity and organisation of contemporary urban living. Here, the greater 'security' provided by contemporary living in fact increases our vulnerability, in the sense that people become

'deskilled' (Barry 2012) (or perhaps highly, but narrowly, skilled); this has clear parallels with Giddens' (1991) notion of contemporary reliance on abstract systems of technology and expertise. It also echoes classic functionalist accounts of organic solidarity. Participants did occasionally imply that not only have humans evolved over time (as discussed above) but are now experiencing a condition of 'over-evolution'. According to participants, this has resulted in a disconnection and alienation from the nonhuman, and a lack of appreciation for our 'original home':

> We are from nature, initially … I feel like most of us are disconnected with the nature. So maybe [we should] just, go back to nature… (Lee)

> Some people take things for granted completely … if I go out to schools I'm like, 'So we wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for plants' … in the scheme of evolution and stuff, well, they were here millions and millions and millions of years before us. And so if we kind of don't take care of that environment and stuff, we're not really showing too much respect for where we came from. (Claire)

> … potentially as a community we can sort of show the world how we can and should live with nature. So… and maybe not be full of the greed and the separateness from nature that so many other parts of the world are … perhaps we can live a fuller, better life. (Catherine)

Here, Catherine, Claire, and Lee are describing disconnection from the nonhuman as problematic. This is a particular form of relationship with the nonhuman (and one which would likely make little sense to someone who does not experience this form of relationship). For

those who feel as these participants do, environmental destruction represents a loss of connection with that from which (it is believed) humans come from. It is a loss of a frame of reference, and highlights part of the link between the bigger-than-human network and ontological security.

As a result of this disconnection and deskilling, most people today (particularly those in or near urbanised spaces) "do not have the basic skills of how to meet the most basic human needs", but the complexity of contemporary societies means that this is no barrier to thriving (Barry 2012: 62). In contrast to this environment, forest experiences provide a space for the experience of vulnerability. Interestingly (and echoing the discussion of preparatory routines above), participants did not experience this feeling of smallness as a threat, but rather as a positive experience.

> This is our planet, but there are so many other things that live on this planet. And that's the great thing, that when you go out into the bush, you realise that you're out of place. So, it's not your natural home and things are tough, and that toughness makes you realise that yeah, you're in someone else's home. And all the things that live out there, which is really important I think, just to be… not to be number one sometimes. (Jack)

> Especially when you're out there in middle of nowhere. And when you stumble, you're like, 'yeah I could fall in there and like, life would just carry on'. [laughs] Yeah. So definitely, you think about the bigger picture and put things into perspective. But it's not like, I don't end up with a, like a 'oh my

> gosh I'm so small, this is pointless' kind of feeling. Yeah. It's a good feeling somehow. (Amelia)

This sense of humility contrasts with the domineering nature of Western, industrial approaches to the nonhuman. Barry (2012) argues that those living in contemporary societies typically deny vulnerability and dependence upon the nonhuman, and this is reflected in processes such as 'being modern' (Latour 1993) and sequestration (Giddens 1991). I agree that this is a correct observation about general patterns of (historical and contemporary) human engagement with the nonhuman. Yet on the individual level, there is ample room for people to explicitly acknowledge this vulnerability and (inter)dependence:

> I say to people, we haven't got an environment, we haven't got anything, you know? All this other stuff might be nice to have, but you've got a trashed environment, you may as well give up… (James)

This reiterates that the links between human-forest interactions and experiences of vulnerability and ontological security are best understood at the micro-level. As Trudgill (2001: 112) suggests, "[w]ilderness is … perhaps now important as a concept of somewhere where we can go where human concerns seem petty and there is a sense of something 'other' than ourselves". The participants of this study live in a society which is built upon Western, industrial, colonialist models of expansion and extraction – and whether because of or despite this, they are also humbled and happy to feel small.

The third aspect of participants' ontological understandings reflected the theme of Tasmanian forests as 'the epitome of life'. Here, forests seemed to act as a conduit for experiencing the

rather abstract phenomenon of 'being', as the forests and their constituent parts act as an archetypal expression of existence itself. Participants described forests as unpredictable, (re)generative, enduring, and living:

> The amazing forests of the East Coast … the fact they've been able to survive in the harshness of that place, sort of coastal areas… for me, that's really amazing. So I don't know, they're like the perfect cycle of life is the forests. (Catherine)

> It's a complex and beautiful landscape, and it's noisy and it's alive. (Don)

> Plants, I like the way that they… they are probably the base of so much life … plants are so diverse, and they… they're survivors! They can teach us a lot about adaptability. (Marie)

> You've gotta sort of be impressed with … the myrtle in particular I suppose. Because they're such a survivor you know? [And] they found these spots where they can survive and they are surviving and they're thriving in these particular spots. So trees are remarkable in that way. (Henry)

> Yeah, so, to me… basically a forest is, is… life. It's, um, all… it's all - it's just an expression of life on the planet, in the same way that other places are. (Nick)

Participants also expressed this idea through the concept of ecosystem complexity. This echoes Cianchi's (2015: 97) description of a Tasmanian environmentalist's experience, in which "the complexity of the ecosystem [is understood] as some kind of information network". Likewise, two-thirds of participants used the language of complexity – small details,

interconnectedness, inter-species relationships, and chain reactions – to understand Tasmanian forests as symbolic of the vitality of (nonhuman) life.

> [Forests are] a great big giant natural, naturally evolved, complex mass of plant species and types. Big trees, medium size trees, little trees, ground cover, scrub, bushes, and multi species, multi species, in some cases interdependent but mostly competing with each other. But you know, the bushes depend on shade from the trees, there's all the microbes and fungi and things living in the soil which depend on the trees and bushes and they depend on it for all kinds of stuff. So it's a fantastically complicated, um, biological, interdependent range of things happening. Of course the animals as well. All the animals on top of it. All the birds and the ground-dwelling critters that live in the trees, on the trees, feed off the trees, eat their fruit, spread their seeds around. Very complicated, and very beautiful. (Don)

> You can [go into forests] literally a metre by a metre by a metre and just be there for a day, or two days even. Like, you know, a lifetime really. Because the minutiae of the forest is amazing as well … just how the forest interconnects with itself. (Catherine)

> When we start to lose species then you start to lose more species, often. So a plant might need a particular butterfly or bee to pollinate it, and if that plant is lost, then perhaps that moth or butterfly is lost, and therefore if those moths or butterflies aren't there, then perhaps some birds that eat them also don't come to that area… and suddenly, things start changing. (Marie)

> The whole ecosystem sort of operates together, and most of them couldn't exist without the other. And that in some ways epitomises life. (Henry)

I found these views of the forest incredibly striking, stating as clearly as they do that participants were not seeing 'just trees'. Rather, these participants were considerate of complex webs of nonhuman interactions and interconnections. In discussing orca tourism, Milstein (2008: 186) suggests that "a focus on whales could serve to distract people from a more interconnected, perhaps more ecologically encompassing story". In much the same way, a focus on trees alone misses a large part of the story of what forests are and symbolise to many people: nonhuman life, human ontology, and existence itself.

This focus on complexity has important implications for how and why humans assess the value of forests. Harvey (1996: 153) roundly and convincingly dismisses the common use of money to valuate forests, arguing that:

> The money value of a whole ecosystem can be arrived at … only by adding up the sum of its parts, which are construed in an atomistic relation to the whole. This way of pursuing monetary valuations tends to break down when we view the environment as being construed organically, ecosystemically, or dialectically … rather than as a Cartesian machine with replaceable parts.

Put simply, recognition of forests as complex ecosystems thoroughly undermines models of forestry practice which proceed with very little consideration of these intricate interrelationships. This also reinforces the notion that plantations – and potentially even regrowth forest, depending on its constitution and age – are insufficient replacements for

more organic forms of forest. As such, while individual trees may be considered a renewable resource, forests are fundamentally non-renewable. Forests are irreplaceable (by humans) in their nonhuman complexity.

The association between forests and the vitality of life leads to interesting complexities around the life span of a forest and 'correct' modes of forest management (Trudgill 2001). For example, Alan seemed to find it absurd that reserved forests would be 'allowed to die', given his assessment of 'living trees' as synonymous with 'living forest':

> [Forests have] got trees in them … it seems crazy to me to just lock them up in a park, and say, 'oh look, we've saved this forest', and then just see them die. Which eventually, we will do, unless nature intervenes and we start again … for some reason or other people prefer dead trees standing up to stumps, because 'man's obviously interfered here, but man hasn't interfered here'.

Other participants' comments, however, indicated a conceptualisation of 'forest' that extended beyond trees, to consider all the constituent and interdependent parts that comprise a forest ecosystem. In this model, the inevitable aging and death of individual trees is simply a part of the forest's life cycle, with both mature and dead trees providing hollows for animal species, or space in the canopy for saplings. This 'repurposing' may account for why the 'people' that Alan referred to are more comfortable with standing dead trees than stumps:

> You see enormous myrtles [that] might be 600 years old and they fall over … immediately, everything else invades that space … so the eucalypts will get

> an opportunity, and two or three of them might thrive if the seeds have been able to get in to the forest canopy prior to that … the dead myrtle is a wonderful opportunity for lots of other life forms to thrive. (Henry)

I suspect, however, that Alan's view is quite common (particularly among logging advocates, whether industrial or small-scale), and reflects both conventional views of environmental management as a matter of conserving "preferences, rather than letting nature take its course" (Trudgill 2001: 118), and of the "dispassionate norm in science" (Head & Harada 2017). For example, Krien (2012: 55) reports that:

> In 2007, when polls showed that most Australian were opposed to logging old-growth forests, Bob Gordon of Forestry Tasmania told the *Australian* he thought the public were being sentimental. 'Old-growth doesn't live forever,' he pointed out. 'Trees die.'.

Drawing on theorist Wendell Berry, Barry (2012: 69) argues that in contemporary Western society, the:

> … dominant attitude to death is to view it as 'pollution' – something wholly negative – rather than as 'fertility' in the sense of being meaningful and constitutive of human life and not something alien to a healthy human condition of part of a flourishing human life.

Extending Barry's argument beyond human life to consider nonhuman lives, this 'sequestration of death' may account for attitudes such as Alan's. Yet other participants, such as Henry above, seemed to resist this notion that an aging forest is not worth 'letting be'. This is perhaps reflective of the inherently future-focused idea that "environments are never complete but are

continually under construction" (Ingold 2000: 172). Forest aging and death are therefore conceptualised by some as processes of life and vitality, rather than decay or staticity.

Time, being, and ontological security

Participants clearly viewed forests as representative of past and future time, both of which are integral to a sense of ontological security. This section has therefore spoken to the two points of ontological security unique to the model of this research: forests as symbolic of the nonhuman, and forests as symbolic of the future.

I am still unsure as to whether the term 'bigger-than-human' adequately or usefully describes the aspects of participants' experiences detailed above. I came to this wording so as to distance the arguments here from the concept of the 'more-than-human'. While theorists engaging in this language rightfully work on dismantling human-nature binaries, the participants quoted above were not only engaging with nonhuman materialities and interconnections (foci of more-than-human theorists), but with concepts of time and existence itself. As in Chapter 2, I argue that forests therefore contribute to a sense of ontological security by being the 'frame of reference' for knowing what it means to be human in a world which precedes and outlasts the individual.

The perceived 'ancientness' of Tasmanian forests is indicative of those forests being symbolic of the past. In this case, however, participants' familiarity with the forest's materiality seemed to extend beyond literal familiarity (such as in how a home could symbolise material constancy, because one is personally acquainted with the details and substances of the space). Rather,

Tasmanian forests symbolise the nonhuman which precedes the individual, by hundreds (if not thousands) of years – yet participants seemed to be able to connect to this vast time-span by way of acknowledging a forest or an individual tree's long-standing materiality. To paraphrase Jane, a tree's value is in its ability to survive, and this survival contributes to a sense of ontological security by acting as a symbol of what has been before, and continues to be. That dead trees may also provide the setting for ongoing life only confirms this symbolism.

Participants' ontological understandings, as framed by their forest experiences, were also strikingly temporal. Discussion of human evolution necessarily looks to the past; the sense that humans are 'part of something' resonates as a locating of humanity in the past, present, and future; while the concept of forests as the 'epitome of life' speaks to complexities, interconnections, and a sense of survival which extends into the future. The points that participants made about forests being the epitome of life – that forests represent existence, survival, and the complexity of interconnection – was an emergent theme I had not expected. I interpret this theme as an expression of human ontology as established in relation to the nonhuman. I had expected that participants would contextualise the frailty and transience of human life by way of comparison with the forest's continuity, but I had not necessarily anticipated the extent to which participants would have located themselves in a bigger-than-human network of interconnected existence.

I suggest that complexity has an ambivalent effect on the construction of ontological security. On one hand, participants depicted complexity as an illustration of the interconnectedness of life, which locates humans within a network (providing a frame of reference for what humans

are, have been, and could be). However, ecosystem complexity also lays bare the consequences of human actions, which most participants seemed to interpret through a lens of precarity (such one ill-effect begetting another). This sense of precarity poses a potential undermining of ontological security.

The humility that participants spoke of (feeling small and vulnerable, but that this was not necessarily a bad thing) was also an emergent theme. This speaks to both point 5 and point 6 of my model of ontological security; 'feeling small' relates to identifying human agency and ontology amidst nonhuman agency and existence (5) but is also an acknowledgement of human vulnerability (6). Crucially for a sense of ontological security, this vulnerability is potentially negotiable and acceptable – the future is 'knowable' as long as the nonhuman (forest) outlasts the individual. This convergence of points 5 and 6 perhaps warrants further analysis. As Sayer (2011: 5) argues, confirming the logic of this convergence:

> Concepts of human agency emphasize the capacity to do things, but our vulnerability is as important as our capacities; indeed the two sides are closely related, for vulnerability can prompt us to act or fail to act, and both can be risky. Capacity and vulnerability are always in relation to various circumstances, whether passing events or enduring conditions.

As such, participants appeared to relate to Tasmanian forests as a frame of reference, in which feeling small does not simply equate to feeling scared; rather, it indicates that the individual is a part of something. This is a clear contribution to a sense of ontological security.

The language that participants used – focusing on evolution, constituent parts, interconnections, adaptation, and survival – functioned to make visible these complex and abstract ideas of what it means to be, and what existence is. It is by acknowledging the forest's intricate and unpredictable details that participants were able to engage with concepts of ontology and locate themselves in a world that precedes and outlasts them (and possibly even all of humanity). Abram (2018) asks what it means to be human in a more-than-human world. Here, my question is how participants understand their being human in a *bigger*-than-human world – and it seems that forest experiences can play a crucial role in this. Forest experiences can remind humans that the planet (and life) does not start nor end with the individual. This helps to foster a sense of (relationally-informed) ontological security. Similarly, participants interpreted the materiality of the forest as demanding recognition of time frames that also outlast the individual, whether in terms of decades, generations, or in perpetuity.

This wide scope of participants' conceptualisations of time reflect the argument, as made in Chapter 2, that ontological security is not solely about the self. Participants' discussions of forest 'ancientness' centred on that (and those) that precede the individual, while participants' future narratives were almost solely comprised of concerns for future generations and nonhuman species. In this way, the forest (and individual trees) stands as a symbol of the future. However, the treatment of that symbol – that is, whether human practices nurture, sustainably manage, or damage forests – shapes the possibilities of that future. As such, Tasmanian forests – as located within the Tasmanian politico-cultural context – may contribute to both the construction and diminishment of an individual's sense of ontological security.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored participants' experiences with/in Tasmanian forests, from immediate experiences of emotion and immersion, to potentially lifelong experiences of self-narrative, to the 'big picture' of ontology, existence, and the distant past and future. The relationship between this chapter's findings and the operationalised model of ontological security is particularly strong, indicating an important link between ontological security and emotion, embodiment, identity, and immersion. This support's Gidden's (1991) argument that ontological security is fundamentally concerned with emotional experiences, everyday performance, and the establishment of a consistent self-narrative.

The following chapter is the final of the three findings and discussion chapters. It returns to a focus on that which occurs 'outside' the forest, exploring the creative activities that participants engaged in following their experiences with/in Tasmanian forests. Chapter 6 also presents the findings from the 'second phase' of data collection, in which participants were invited to submit materials that represented Tasmanian forests. The following chapter therefore focuses on the ongoing role that forests play in participants' everyday lives, undermining the notion that the forest's effects are limited to their ecosystem confines.

Chapter 6: After the Forest

The two previous chapters have explored participants' understandings and experiences of Tasmanian forests. This has encompassed the meanings and concepts formulated from 'outside' the forest space, and the practices, emotions, and identity work experienced in interaction with the forest. This chapter is concerned with the ongoing effects of Tasmanian forests in participants' lives. The first half of the chapter explores the role of creative activities in 'making real' elements of participants' forest experiences. As with Chapters 4 and 5, I first present the findings of this theme, before moving on to a discussion linking these findings to the ontological security framework. The second half of this chapter presents and discusses the materials that participants submitted in response to the prompt, 'what represents Tasmanian forests to you?'

Context: Creativity

The salience of participants' creative activities emerged over the course of the interviews. These creative activities included building and design, painting, writing, and photography. I had not anticipated the extent to which participants had engaged in these activities, both during and after their forest experiences. It became evident that these activities acted as a way of bringing the forest experience 'back home'.

The first of these activities, building and design, featured most prominently in Daniel's interview. Daniel had experience building wooden boats using Tasmanian timbers, and seemed very concerned with restrictions surrounding the procurement of specialty timbers for

the producers of artisanal Tasmanian timber products. Ben also spoke about his experience in furniture design, in which he focused primarily on the use of sustainable and recycled materials. Ken and Diane both mentioned family members who were involved in furniture making, while Gordon said the he "would like to have made furniture, but the time has passed" due to concerns about the future of his family farm.

Ken and Jane discussed their experiences of painting (both during and after forest experiences), in which they created their own representations of Tasmanian forests. Alan read forest-inspired prose of his own composition during his interview, and discussed the role that writing plays for him in expressing complex concepts. Twelve participants discussed the place of photography in their forest experiences, and the role of forest photographs in their 'everyday' lives. These conversations centred mostly on the enjoyment and satisfaction that forest photography brought to participants, although several participants also mentioned times that they did not bother to take photographs. I suspect that these comments reflect the ubiquity of photography, in that not taking photographs 'requires' explanation.

These creative activities are significant for illustrating the ongoing presence of Tasmanian forests in participants' lives. The materials produced by participants represent different forms of expression and knowledge than those verbalised during interviews, and facilitate the expression of concepts and experiences that are difficult to articulate. The performance of creative activities also supports the argument that embodied experiences are a significant element of human-forest engagements.

Reification

As I read the transcripts of participants' interviews, a question occurred to me: what do people 'do' with their forest experiences? The creative activities that participants performed seemed to go some way in answering this question. Participants' creative activities work to capture, express, and celebrate their experiences and symbolic understandings of Tasmanian forests: these activities 'make real' the forest by producing a material manifestation of what the forest means to participants. As such, I have termed this process 'reification'. This section (as with the remainder of this chapter) draws upon the responses of fewer participants than Chapters 4 and 5 have. Nevertheless, this process of reification has significant implications for understanding the significance of Tasmanian forests in participants' lives.

Building and design is a highly situated act, given the political implications of sourcing timber products in Tasmania. Multiple participants made comment that the production of artisanal timber products is a good 'way forward' for Tasmania. As Daniel argued:

> [In] my personal opinion, and I'll echo [former Tasmanian Greens politician] Kim Booth on this one - he said we shouldn't be letting any specialty timber go interstate, unless it's value-added here … We've got heaps of specialty timbers here. Most of it's in reserves, but I think that we need to use that as part of … the uniqueness of our society. Not just, cut it down and ship it off, I think that's crazy. We need to be able to value-add it, we need to be able to make things here that benefit our society.

Likely reflecting these political implications, participants framed building and design in terms of sustainable resource use. Ken mentioned that his son had recently begun building furniture using 'hydrowood' (timber reclaimed from flooded areas), describing the product as "an example of what was lost being reworked and re-found and used to great advantage". Much of Ben's work was concerned with the use of recycled and sustainably used materials, which he linked to his broader interest in forest (and more general environmental) protection:

> I've developed this interest in what we make and what it's made of and the meaning behind it, all these aspects of broader [sustainable living] … it's kinda linked I suppose [to going] to forest protests and stuff in the Florentine … there's kind of these links where I've been in nature, I'll be aware of these issues. I'll be aware of the broader world and my concerns about what we're doing to it, and why we're- why we even need to make so much stuff. So that's a bit of a roundabout way, but I think that, that had a certain impact on me when I was doing my Master's [in Furniture Design], where I was already researching but there were forestry operations going on and I could just see on a global scale the issues, and the waste, and the sadness of … the system that makes no sense but continues to go on, because it's been going on now for fifty years.

For both Ben and Daniel, there was a clear link between Tasmanian politics, global and local environmental concerns, and their building work. While both were critical of what they viewed as unsustainable forestry practices, they had quite contradictory perspectives on the sourcing of specialty timbers:

> [Traditional skills such as boat-building] form a really important part of the fabric of society that we're known for … we've got generations of people here who have particular techniques that have developed from colonial England, indigenous techniques as well. And we're in danger of losing them. And they all require access to the resource to continue them. (Daniel)

> [There's been almost this assumed link] that everyone who makes furniture really only cares about getting the good timber, and that they think forestry are fantastic. Which I never have, and I've never had anything to do with that aspect of design in Tasmania … I think it's more important that most forests are protected, than that people continue to make things out of celery-top pine and myrtle. (Ben)

Bound up in this theme of sustainability was a common focus on the temporal dimensions of timber products. Daniel described boat-building as "not only making something beautiful and functional, but it's also sequestering carbon for generations". Further, Daniel was also concerned about the preservation of the 'cultural heritage' of boat-building:

> True traditional boat-building, where we're actually using solid timber and using the properties of the timber to ensure a boat is water-tight … it's a skill that's dying out … We want to be able to maintain that cultural heritage and keep transmitting it to each generation.

On a related note, Diane was emphatic about the 'second life' that well-built timber products could give to trees. She contrasted this with industrial forestry practices:

> [These trees] were here when Aboriginals were walking around. And when the sealers and whalers were up and down here. Those trees were here. But you chop 'em down and you turn them into woodchips… it's just gone. That history's gone. Whereas if you turn it into a lovely piece of furniture, or a window frame or whatever, that timber is still… still there. It's still got a life, just in a different form … and you can feel the love that's gone into making that beautiful piece of furniture.

These participants' perspectives on building and design reflect a desire for preservation – of material constancy, of ecosystems, of ways of living, and of trees – which speaks to the temporality implicitly involved with forests. This temporal element is particularly evident when considering these desires for preservation and continuity in light of the (global and local) concerns discussed in Chapter 4, and the forest connections discussed in Chapter 5.

Ken and Jane's painting experiences were less politically loaded. Ken described his work as "a poetic response", explaining that:

> … the idea is, the strength of this imagining, this interpretation or this [poetic] vision … leaves a longer impression on a viewer than a photograph of the same thing … this is an imaginary created environment that I'm painting.

Jane's approach differed from Ken's, as she seemed less concerned with attempting to capture the abstract dimensions of her forest experiences. Instead, Jane more heavily emphasised the painting process itself as a relaxing experience:

> …in the natural environment, I'm inspired to try and reproduce the look, the light, the feel, the texture, the colour … it doesn't matter if it's good, or bad, it's the experience of doing it. It's like meditating or yoga - you don't have to perform it. You just have to do it.

Both Ken and Jane, however, alluded to the notion that there is 'something' to the forest that is more than its literal material appearance that is difficult to capture. Jane said:

> I didn't make [forests], and nobody else did either. So I… you know, I can draw a chair, because I'm a human and all humans have got chairs so I can draw a chair in my head. But I can't … I don't know how nature's made that.

Beyond this, Ken and Jane had in common the experience of painting as a means of taking the forest 'back home'. Both described a process of continuing to contemplate and work on a painting, in an ongoing attempt to capture the ephemeral:

> I put that piece of paper up on the wall, at least a week just looking at it, just looking at it. Thinking how I'd improve it, but also remembering where I was. So it's like taking a photo. (Jane)

> The big trees have got a lot to offer [me] yet. Like, years, probably. Until I get it right, if I ever do … it's a very slow process, and sometimes you're caught off-guard, and you don't actually realise you've made ground when you have. And I think what you're doing currently informs that view of what you've done in the past. You see a relevance for it that you hadn't realised at the time. Hard to explain. (Ken)

Echoing Ken's concept of 'poetic response', Alan discussed his experiences of writing prose. He explained his unconventional views about the role of emotion in poetic communication:

> I'm not a good… traditional poet. I like to write facts, I like to write information, I like to convey in verse … [poetry] shouldn't be wasted on what I call mere feelings. And of course, most poets say, 'well that's what poetry is for, it's feeling' … I don't seem to have the emotions that others might put it into there.

The implication here is that Alan used poetry to communicate complex ideas in simple, accessible language. This perhaps reflects Alan's reluctance to express emotion during his interview, where he instead drew heavily from his forest research background (rather than from recreational forest experiences). The main topic that Alan addressed during the interview was forest management, particularly in terms of correcting the biases he perceived in people blaming human behaviour for forest changes (rather than accepting that forests have non-anthropocentrically-influenced cycles of waste, regeneration, and decomposition). As I described in Chapter 3, I suspect that ontological security is a less effective explanatory frame for Alan's forest interactions than it is for any other participant. Nevertheless, his focus on the material conditions of forests still suggests an association between forests, temporality, future narratives, and materiality. I argue that Alan's writing therefore functioned as a method of communicating – as other participants 'made real'– his ideas and concerns about Tasmanian forests.

The main creative activity described by participants was photography. Primarily, photography seemed to function – not dissimilarly to building and design – as a means of 'preservation'.

Participants viewed their photographs as a way to capture and keep something about the forest – or about their forest experiences – that was impermanent, precarious, or inaccessible in urban life. Memory "can reside in material culture" and revisiting photographs is an an "enactment of memory" (Atkinson 2015: 97); participants described their photographs as having captured the beautiful aesthetics of forest species, and as having preserved moments, memories, and lost places.

> Capturing the memories … I don't mean to brag, but taking a photo of a bird, an awesome photo of a bird, and going, 'Yeah, I saw that. And here's evidence, and it's awesome', and I like to share that on Facebook and social media … even if no one comments or anything, at least it's up there. Just a general appreciation, awareness. (Helen)

> [Taking photographs is] like being able to capture a moment, and then, I guess, have that moment not taken away from you. Like, you might forget about it because you've got other things going on in your life, but you can always look back on a photo album … [and] you go, 'oh, that was really special, and I didn't appreciate that as much as I should've'. (Claire)

> I'm the photographer. I'm still perfecting my macro stuff, but I've improved, I think … it's nice to sit at the computer doing, doing a report or something, and if you … go onto screensaver and it goes to my camera, to my photo file, and it just brings up random pictures you see. And you sit there and think, 'oh, yeah', it's a nice reminder. Think, 'oh, yeah, I remember where all that was'. (James)

> Yeah, used to take lots of photos, as I said we've got boxes and boxes of slides, waterfalls and forests and things, yeah … Why? Memories. Memories, and to show people, show other people what it's like. So we've shown lots of overseas visitors those slides, and lots of… we showed the girls, we used to have a slide night, and show the photos … so memories, and I suppose now in some respects, what it used to look like in some places. (Diane)

I found Diane's comment quite poignant; for her, photographs seemed to function as a kind of 'memorial' to place. This highlights the precariousness of some of the special Tasmanian places that participants had visited and loved. Similarly, Lara (a photographic artist) described the process of using photography to immerse oneself in a place:

> The use of digital cameras now really encourages that kind of 'grabbing' … without necessarily any connection. So I started walking over the road, and walking through… you know, hiding from the farmers … And I started to take my cameras, and that started to mean something. So it started to be about connecting to place. (Lara)

Lara also discussed her ideas around capturing a sense of 'authenticity' in landscape and forest photography. She described the shift from 'romantic' views of space (in which the audience retains distance, and human-nature binaries are reinforced), to using photographs to convey a sense of immersion:

> The idea of landscape and bush was actually something you stood back from, whereas now it's about being in it … I had a very romantic idea about bush and landscape … I think my generation did … So I would never refer to any

> human agency, even though there is human agency… [now] I feel the need that I do actually have to refer to humans … [and] if you actually want [to convey] this sense of being in the bush, then a lot of the time you're actually peering through things. So that means getting close to [the things you are photographing].

Lara's comments convey her attempts to capture something authentic in her photographs of Tasmanian forests. This is – as with the other participants who discussed photography as 'preservation' or 'capturing' – a process of reification, in which photography functions to make real elements of the forest itself, or of the forest experience. Participants revisited these images after their forest experiences and this re-viewing seemed to be a significant activity, reinforcing the forest's role in participants' 'post-visit' lives. It is also significant that several participants described themselves as having had many years' experience in photographing forests, rendering their images a visual representation of their long-term relationships with Tasmanian forests.

Reification and ontological security

The creative activities described above – through which participants created literal material manifestations of Tasmanian forests, and their own experiences therein – are a form of reification where the abstract, ephemeral, and/or precarious is 'made real'. As such, the products of this process – including photographs, poetry, and wooden boats – are material representations of participants' relationships with Tasmanian forests. Where Ben spoke of the significance of using sustainable or recyclable materials, for example, he was speaking of specific aspects of his own experiences with/in Tasmanian forests. Likewise, where Ken

discussed his attempting to capture a 'poetic' expression of the forest, he was also relating his work to his own, particular understandings of Tasmanian forests. Reification and creative activities are also performances that capture the forests' symbolising of material constancy, as participants took what they value about Tasmanian forests and gave it permanency through their work. Much of what participants said about building and design was concerned with capturing the temporal dimensions of forests and trees. Similarly, participants' photography centred on the reproduction of experience of place (particularly when that moment or place was transient or precarious). In this way, reification contributes to a sense of ontological security by confirming and supporting the forest's materiality, and manifesting participants' relationships with the places they feel that they belong.

As building and design are the most literal examples of reification in this study, the emphasis that participants placed on sustainability has interesting implications for the relationship between reification and materiality. Building a boat from Tasmanian specialty timbers is a representation of forests in much the same way as a painting or photograph could be – but the harvesting of timber also necessitates a 'taking away' from the forest. The focus on sustainability therefore functions as a way to retain these activities (and the cultural heritage that accompanies such skills), while also being compatible with a sense of ontological security. This is highly evident in Ben's comment about the importance of "most forests [being] protected", and Daniel's approach of loving Tasmanian forests while only using specialty timbers and specialist skills in sustainable ways.

Creative activities also implicate the establishment of a consistent self-narrative. This is a two-fold process. As argued in Chapter 5, Tasmanian forests can be symbolic of consistent self-narrative; if a photograph or painting, then, is symbolic of the forest, it may in turn be symbolic of that individual's self-narrative. Participants' photography is a particularly straightforward example of this process – by acting as a representation of a valued place, that photograph may also be a representation of that place's role in the self-narrative. Secondly, the very creation of these artworks involves the establishment of self-narrative. If an individual has been painting for decades, painting is likely to be a key part of their self-narrative (in much the same way as bushwalking has functioned for participants in this study). The creation of these pieces – wooden boats, furniture, paintings, poems, and photographs – is therefore a further illustration of the significant and ongoing presence that Tasmanian forests have in people's lives.

Representations: Participant submissions

In presenting the materials submitted by participants in response to the prompt 'what represents Tasmanian forests to you?', the remainder of this chapter discusses a similar process to reification. In this section, I illustrate the links between the thematic content of participants' submissions, and the themes of the interview data discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. This reflects the influence of the interviews upon the representations that participants chose to submit. It also reflects the significance of these themes, given that they are what participants chose to emphasise through their various forms of response to the research topic.

Chapter 3 provided a summary of these submitted materials, alongside a discussion of the methodological approach in gathering and analysing the submissions. Eleven participants submitted a total of 49 individual pieces, ranging from written responses (composed to address the prompt) to paintings, song lyrics, and photographs. Most submissions were photographs (with 40 individual images); this is unsurprising, given the accessibility of photography in contemporary society, and the salience of photography for participants (as described above). As outlined in Chapter 3, I have attributed the texts presented here to different pseudonyms than those used in the previous chapters. I have also declined to specify whether the participant produced the material themselves. To the best of my knowledge, I have provided citations for the content of all publicly available materials.

This section opens with the written responses that Ashley, Bobby, and Jamie submitted to directly address the prompt. I then present other materials (paintings, poem, story, dance routine, and lyrics) that participants submitted, before concluding with a discussion of participants' photographic contributions. The materials presented here illustrate three key points. Firstly, alongside the interview data, these submissions act as further evidence of the implication of forests in a sense of ontological security; secondly, these submissions allow access to different forms of knowledge and experience than those accessible through the interviewing process; and finally, these submissions demonstrate the ongoing presence of forests in participants' lives, long after they leave the forest space. Following the suggestion of Saldaña and Omasta (2018: 66-86), in "analysing documents, artifacts, and visual materials", I have aimed to "explore the attributed values, attitudes, and beliefs about them from the participants' perspectives". This inquiry has aimed to explore the difficulties and shortcomings

of verbal expression regarding human-nonhuman relationships, and these submissions offer a potential way of circumventing these problems. These materials provide a glimpse into that which matters to participants about Tasmanian forests, chosen and presented by the participants themselves.

Written responses

Three participants submitted written (300-750 word) pieces directly addressing the prompt, a form of response I had not anticipated receiving. There were striking similarities between the three texts, with the composition of each indicating that the participants had grappled with how to contain a complex and multifaceted topic. Bobby's response stated this difficulty outright:

> In truth I am struggling to settle on what sort of contribution to make as the phrase "what represents – Tasmanian forests – to you" invokes many and varied emotional and intellectual responses.

Ashley's response to this problem was simpler: the representation possible or necessary "depends on the forest". The composition of each text reflected this difficulty and complexity. Jamie and Bobby's responses involved many ideas and concepts tied to forests, threaded one after the other in a weaving of "thoughts, such as they are, as an addendum to the interview process" (Bobby). The excerpt below demonstrates the diverse range of ideas conveyed by Bobby's response:

> Forests are aesthetically-pleasing places to be, in any weather … Forests are a refuge from the rattle and clamour of working life … Insects, microbes,

> reptiles, birds, all mutually interdependent … Forests, like plankton in the sea, are the planet's lungs. They take in our waste carbon dioxide and return to us live-giving oxygen. But we're chopping them down at an insane, unsustainable rate for monetary gain … A groundswell of public opinion may lead eventually to us taking a rather more thoughtful, caretaker approach … Democracy may be the best of a bad lot but one would hope, probably naively, that one man-one vote was on an informed, educated basis … Ninety nine percent of all species that ever existed are extinct. We fool ourselves that our species is exempt. Will that do?

This final question – 'Will that do?' – is noteworthy, possibly expressing the extent to which a representation of Tasmanian forests may never be whole or complete. Instead, it simply does 'enough'.

The composition of each of these texts reflects a binary of 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of Tasmanian forests, simplifying the complexity of the topic. The excerpt above shows that the dichotomisation within Bobby's response is quite implicit, moving from a gently positive note regarding the ontological role of forests, to a dismayed meditation on human treatment of forests. Bobby then moved back to a sense of ontological precarity, expressing his awareness of human fragility beholden to the consequences of others' environmental choices. The final paragraph of Jamie's response is similar:

> I am sorry to say the joyfulness and soulfulness of my personal response to being in a forest cannot help but be diminished by the dark fear that it is

being mishandled so badly that very little will be left for my grandchildren and their children.

The composition of Ashley's piece is more explicit in its binary approach. These juxtapositions convey a dichotomy of forests (representing life, environment, place, and species) as 'good', and forestry (representing plantations, pollution, unsustainability, and greed) as 'bad'. While this binary is obviously a simplification of these participants' views (given the nuances expressed in every participants' interview responses), it nevertheless serves a useful purpose in 'condensing' a multifaceted subject. The topics covered by each of the three responses also reflected this dichotomy, as seen in the excerpts below:

Bobby	Jamie	Ashley
Forests, like plankton in the sea, are the planet's lungs. They take in our waste carbon dioxide and return to us live-giving oxygen. But we're chopping them down at an insane, unsustainable rate for monetary gain. … Plantation timber can perform these tasks but old-growth forest needs to be disposed of first to make way, the residue burnt - smoke a major contributor to greenhouse gases and otherwise polluter of the atmosphere.	I could mention the wonderful understory Flora in our temperate rainforest in particular which is only able to survive because of the forest, the Fungi, the mosses and lichens. … I could write about the industrialisation of forestry practices and the extraordinary damage done to our shared environment, and the evidence of that destruction being ignored/denied by our elected representatives. A small part of this is the creation of monocultures in plantations.	My own bushland represents peace, tranquility, curiosity and hope conjoined with sustenance. … Our state-owned forests represent destruction, waste, greed and stupidity.

This dichotomisation echoes the binary construction of the 'forestry wars' discussed in Chapter 1. Binaries and 'sides' are useful as rhetoric and shorthand labelling tactics, but do not capture the complex realities of social life and human-nonhuman interactions. In terms of representation, however, a reliance on binaries is a useful narrative device, and these three

responses therefore clearly convey their authors' feelings and ideas. In this dichotomy, forests and forestry stand in as symbols of ontology, vulnerability, interconnectedness, naturalness, and wellbeing, illustrating that Tasmanian forests are about much more than 'just trees'.

Another theme evident in each of the written responses is distrust of those in decision-making positions (particularly politicians). The excerpts above demonstrate this, with all three participants expressing disdain for the choices made by those in management positions. Bobby also criticized that:

> There are people we have voted into positions of authority who deny the anthropogenic component of climate change, possibly even the big, multi-millenial natural cycles of global warming and cooling.

These concerns echo many of the themes discussed in Chapter 4: participants' respect and love of Tasmanian places, global environmental concerns, and distrust of Tasmanian politicians and organisations. It is difficult to escape the notion that speaking of or for Tasmanian forests – that is, representing Tasmanian forests – means acknowledging a fundamental climate of vulnerability.

One further theme common to each of the written responses is temporality, with Tasmanian forests represented as a contextualising agent of time. Bobby's response echoed concerns raised in interviews about the pace of contemporary urban life. He contrasted this with an understanding of forests as representing fundamentally different and longer time scales:

> Telephones demand to be answered, deadlines must be met, obligations fulfilled. The clock rules … In the forest there is an entirely different, slower timescale.

Ashley's response also outlined the contrast of different time scales, explaining that Tasmanian (state-owned) forests represent:

> Destruction, because over the years I've been on many clearfelled coupes and seen the results of that regime. It is likely that none will ever return to their state before men with chainsaws and excavators attacked them, because they will be attacked again in a few years.

Jamie and Ashley's representations of Tasmanian forests involve narratives of the future, including Jamie's comment (above) regarding his fears about the world his grandchildren will inherit. Ashley's response depicts a future of mishandling but potential:

> [State-owned forests represent] [s]tupidity, because none of those in charge recognise the true value of the forests they have control of: a potentially perpetual supply of low embodied carbon building materials; of carbon kosher-firewood; of clean water, and enjoyment for tourists and others.

These responses represent forests as a site through which people contextualise human and nonhuman pasts, present circumstances, and possible futures (again echoing themes evident throughout the interview data). One quote of Jamie's response was particularly explicit in drawing a link between Tasmanian forests and humans' temporal and ontological 'location':

> I could talk about the unique flora (e.g. Nothofagus Gunnii, Huon Pine) we have, or other Nothofagus (e.g. Cunninghumii) which have linkages to the mainland, South America and Antarctica and the old Gondwanaland – so it helps explain our place in the world.

Jamie (alongside Ashley and Bobby) therefore chose to represent Tasmanian forests as a symbol of one's 'place in the world': a clear nod to ontological security's processes of stability, familiarity, and predictability.

Song and dance; story, poem, and paintings

Inviting participants to submit materials in a variety of formats was an essential element of the data collection. In doing so I had hoped to encourage participants to choose formats that 'made sense' to them; the variety of texts nonetheless surprised me, particularly from the four participants who chose to represent Tasmanian forests through song lyrics and a dance routine (Morgan), a story (Rory), a poem (Charlie), and reproductions of two paintings (Lindsay). The diversity of these materials presented me with an interesting analytical challenge. Through the analysis of these materials, two dominant themes emerged: firstly, emotional and/or ethical connection with the nonhuman, and the performativity of coming to its defence (story, lyrics, and dance); and secondly, ideas of ontology, the future, and 'something bigger' than humans (paintings and poem). Due to anonymity concerns, I have not included the content of Charlie's poem.

The first of these themes (connection and defence) is concerned with relationships, ethics, and performativity. Rory's submission was a story titled 'The Ocean in Our Blood', a publication

found online on the state news forum *Tasmanian Times* (Sumby 2007). This piece tells the narrative of a child's experience of fishing, which (through seeing a killed fish) becomes a catalyst for the experience of empathy for the nonhuman. The piece opens with a biographical retelling of the fishing incident, before it gives way to a meditation on empathy for the nonhuman. The story's composition clearly indicates its role as an ethical imperative or treatise; the first-person tone is personal, relatable, and firm in its convictions:

> That night we ate the fish my Dad caught but I never have had a desire to fish again … the very life that is interwoven and interconnected through all places and all times figure little in our conscience although we share that space with them absolutely.
>
> (Sumby 2007)

The text concludes with a moral message of defending the nonhuman for its own sake. In doing so, the author appeals to outside authority by closing with a quote from biologist and conservationist George Schaller:

> 'One of the real mistakes in the conservation movement in the last few years is the tendency to see nature simply as natural resources: Use it or lose it. Yet conservation without moral values cannot sustain itself. Unless we reach people through beauty, ethics, spiritual or religious values, or whatever; we're not going to keep our wilderness areas.'

The story's composition is significant, resulting in a piece that is strongly moral, and convincing in its attempts to persuade the reader. The narrative builds its argument through an appeal to empathy, with the story's environmental ethics grounded in a Levinasian sense of relating

compassionately to 'the face' of the other (rather than reacting with violence, as in the case of the story's opening paragraphs) (Ezzy 2004; Banham 2020, forthcoming). A further implicit assumption of this story is the transformative power of intimacy – the notion that one needs to see the nonhuman to 'get it', and then come to its defence – alongside the inoculative capacity of education (as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). As Sumby (2007) states:

> In the course of my time, I've heard the phrase 'wake up'. I've used it myself, and other people have told me how they 'woke up', and I've tried to teach and wake people up.

The story's concluding quote from Schaller also echoes this sentiment. Curiously, for a text so full of conviction, there appears at times a self-conscious tone:

> To me a sense of place is the particular place or environment that allows you to feel and connect with the wholeness of life, to feel and be part of the pulse of the World-animal.
>
> Trying to communicate that sense to others without sounding like a dickhead, trippy hippie, or new-ager is the challenge ('So, you hug trees?').
>
> (Sumby 2007)

This idea – that connection to the nonhuman can be difficult or problematic to communicate – echoes arguments that I have made throughout this thesis, and is central to the methodology of inviting participants to submit their own choice of materials. In speaking with Tasmanian environmentalists, Cianchi (2015: 55) found that there was:

> … a taboo on discussion of relationships with inanimate individuals such as trees. This may reflect beliefs that activists should not be 'hippies'. One participant told me … 'The kind of experiences that I'm talking to you about I would not talk about to activists unless they were friends.' Having hippy beliefs seems to render an activist foolish or unprofessional, and therefore someone who is not taken seriously by other activists, foresters, police or media.

Cianchi's findings here also echo the power dynamics that I have identified in Tasmania's forestry conflicts. While those who foster emotional connections to forests are at great risk of experiencing emotional vulnerability and suffering (and other types thereof), the delegitimising of emotional and relational connections to the nonhuman undermines these individuals' ability to be 'taken seriously'. The author of 'The Ocean in Our Blood' seems to 'get it' and 'feel it', but acknowledges that this experience of connection can remain difficult to express to others. Rory did not offer an explicit reason for choosing this piece as his submission, but I speculate that this message is why he did so; while it is about a marine environment, the story expresses (on Rory's behalf) this tension between empathy and connection, defence and education, and communication.

Furthering this theme of communication, two of Morgan's submissions (the lyrics of 'Letter from Risdon Prison' by Peter Kearney, and a dance routine entitled 'World Heritage') are distinctly performative means of expression. Morgan described 'Risdon Prison' as "a song I like to sing, especially in wild places"; according to the caption included by Morgan, it is "[b]ased on Karin Donaldson's reflection on the sacredness of environment, written while she was in

Risdon Prison Hobart after being arrested during the blockades to save the Franklin River" (a description repeated from Kearney's website [Kearney 2019]). The song's composition is unmistakably that of a rallying cry, with the repetition of the phrase "in the wilderness", culminating in the assertion "All your dams be damned indeed, we'll save our wilderness" (Kearney 1988).

'Risdon Prison' (like 'The Ocean in Our Blood') is a moral imperative about connection to the nonhuman and the actions of coming to its defence. The tone of Kearney's (1998) lyrics is uplifting, providing the reader (or singer) with the sense that there is action to take in the face of environmental destruction. This too echoes the 'education as inoculation' and 'you have to see it to get it' arguments above; where 'The Ocean in Our Blood' petitions for change through education, 'Risdon Prison' appeals to change through the solidarity of an environmentalist chant. This is perhaps an example of collectivity as 'inoculation', where it is the knowledge that others will stand in defence of the nonhuman that provides a sense of comfort about the planet's environmental future. While the form of 'World Heritage' – a dance routine – is fundamentally different to 'Risdon Prison', its composition expresses a similar narrative. Like the lyrics, the routine establishes a context of environmental concern, provides an appeal to the beauty of the ecosystems in question, and ends on a hopeful note.

World Heritage

Inspired by Tasmania's beautiful and vital forests and in protest against the newly elected Federal and State Liberal governments' policies to strip some of them of World Heritage status and log them, and by the degradation of the Great Barrier Reef for coal mining ports and other developments.

Formation: Duple minor longwise improper set, starting in short ocean waves (across the set)

Steps: Dance walk (contra). Level: Easy+.

	Beats	Call	Details
A1	16	Balance, twirl R Balance, twirl L	Balance R, L, Rory O'More twirl over R Sh past nbr Balance L, R, Rory O'More twirl over L Sh past nbr
A2	16	Nbr B&S	Balance and swing nbr
B1	8	Give & take	
	8	Ptnr swing	
B2	8	Circle L ¾ & reform wave	Reform short ocean wave across
	8	Balance, walk fwd	Balance R, L, walk fwd to new wave

Music: 32 bar reels or jigs, preferably with strong rhythm or bounce in A part

Meaning of figures: Ocean wave – Great Barrier Reef; Lines in Give and Take – trunks of tall trees in Tas. forests; A1: Hope that after a shift to the R will come a shift to the L; Give and take – hope that giving eventually balances out with our taking from the Earth.

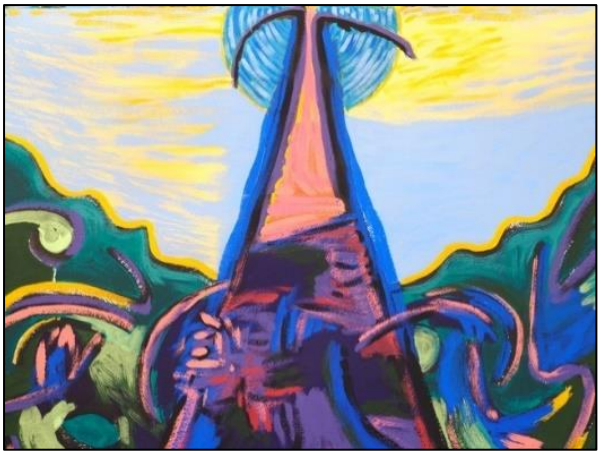
The geographic positioning of 'Risdon Prison' and 'World Heritage' is clear, with both pieces referencing Tasmania's tumultuous history of damming and forestry proposals. Both pieces also appeal to wilderness rhetoric, making these pieces highly political representations of Tasmanian forests. Being inherently performative pieces – a literal song and dance – these texts reflect concepts of 'mobilisation' and 'taking up arms' in defence of the nonhuman.

The future narratives of these three pieces ('The Ocean in Our Blood', 'Risdon Prison', and 'World Heritage') echo the mingled hope and concern of the future narratives that participants expressed during interviews. Interestingly, both Rory's story submission and Morgan's dance

submission refer to marine environments (Rory's exclusively so), and yet these contributions were in response to a prompt explicitly about Tasmanian forests. This seems to be an acknowledgment (conscious or not) by Rory and Morgan of the interconnectedness of nonhuman entities and ecosystems, in the sense that the ethics and problems that apply to one nonhuman or ecosystem may readily apply to another. To represent Tasmanian forests does not have to mean only referring to the forest, supporting the argument I made in Chapter 4 that responses to Tasmania's forests occur in a broader climate of concern and relationship.

The second 'theme group' of these (non-written and non-photographic) materials is ontology, the future, and the bigger-than-human. The paintings submitted by Lindsay and the poem submitted by Charlie explore these themes. Permeating these three contributions are messages of vitality, long-term time, and the nonhuman as distinctly 'separate' from human processes and control.

The composition of the reproduced paintings submitted by Lindsay ('Big Tree Omnipotent' and 'Big Tree with Cogged Halos') positions large trees as the forest's focal point. 'Omnipotent', particularly, draws the viewer's eye upwards, encouraging a reading of the tree as a majestic figure towering above the viewer.



Big Tree Omnipotent, Lindsay

Big Trees with Cogged Halos, Lindsay

Both these paintings confer an exultant, lively, almost religious atmosphere (particularly in the visual emphasis placed on the trees' halos). The bright colours and wavy lines contribute to an abstract, celebratory, and slightly surreal depiction of the forest, while the landscape view 'presents' the trees as something apart from humans, contributing to their transcendent positioning (as established by the eponymous words 'omnipotent' and 'halos'). These compositional choices situate the eucalypts as the 'stars' of the forest, and objects of (agnostic, or at least not explicitly religious) reverence. This approach reflects a sense of forests and trees as symbolic of 'something bigger' than humans, through which humans may establish (humble) ontological understandings. The colours used, and the abstract quality of the shapes, also reflect a valuation of forests as aesthetic entities; here the forest is colourful, alive, majestic, and energetic. This is a distinct break from depictions of forests as dark, impenetrable, 'untameable wilderness', as decaying ecosystems, or as dangerous spaces. Rather, the representation of Tasmanian forests that Lindsay chose to share is a depiction of these forests as representing life and vitality. Interestingly, Morgan's 'World Heritage' submission also used the word 'vital' to describe Tasmania's forests.

Charlie submitted a poem which, while of a very different form, shares compositional and thematic similarities with 'Omnipotent' and 'Cogged Halos'. The poem's arrangement emphasises fluidity, vitality, and vibrant colour, with colour being the primary poetic device. Like the two paintings, this ensures a representation of the forest that is strongly aesthetic. The poem's lack of rigid meter and rhyme structure also contributes to a sense of the forest's organic and unpredictable nature; like the paintings that Lindsay contributed, this verse presents a representation of Tasmanian forests as symbolic of nonhuman vitality. The poem's narrative follows the forest's life cycle from early growth, through fire disturbance, and into the continuance of life. The poem's final lines leave the reader with an ongoing future narrative, describing the futurity and ongoing action of the surviving forest. The heavy use of verbs is prominent throughout the piece, particularly in describing fire events; this reliance on verbs gives a sense of vitality and action, depicting the forest as an ongoing, vital, interconnected network which is not only nonhuman, but exists outside of human control. I hesitate to necessarily label Charlie's poem as an illustration or advocacy of forest agency as such, but it does position Tasmanian forests as actively sustaining life.

The central theme of this poem submitted by Charlie is time, particularly the idea of large time scales and life cycles as symbolised by the forest. Again, this theme frames the forest as bigger than humans, in its ability to outlast (and potentially overpower) human life. This too reflects the interview data, where participants commonly referred to 'ancientness' and future time in relation to Tasmanian forests. This focus on time – and the poem's focus on fire – also relates to notions of forest management. According to the poem's narrative, following fire is renewal

of life. While many of the other submitted texts have a focus on the precarity of the nonhuman, this poem positions the forest as ongoing, outside of human influence. Integral to this view is a focus on large time scales and the complex interrelationships of forest species and processes. In the poem's narrative, these species and processes – soil, chlorophyll, insects, trees, fire, wind, and sky – construct a network in which life 'happens'. This is a 'bigger than humans' representation of Tasmanian forests.

Photographs

Five participants submitted photographic representations of Tasmanian forests. Morgan, who also submitted the dance routine and song lyrics discussed above, submitted five photographs; Jesse submitted three, and Robin and Riley each submitted one photograph each. Rowan submitted a set of thirty photographs, with a detailed caption accompanying each.

I endeavoured to first consider each participants' photographs as a 'set', taking into account the overarching theme of each participants' contribution. For purposes of cross-analysis, I have also considered the composition and themes of each photograph as an individual text. Here I present a small selection from the 40 images, chosen to discuss the three dominant themes of all the photographs: human presence (or lack thereof); diversity and complexity; and Tasmania. The section concludes with a discussion of Robin's contributed photograph and extended caption, as it is a representation of Tasmanian forests which encapsulates many of the key themes of this inquiry.

The presence of human figures varies widely across the participants' submissions. Three of Morgan's five photographs are portraits, and Riley's single image contains a person at its centre. However, just one of Rowan's 30 photographs features humans, with the figures comprising only a minor part of the image (see below). No other submitted photographs featured human figures.

Rowan

Morgan's choice of images (captioned as "Some photos of some of my favourite places") seemed to largely focus on the concept of sharing forest experiences with others. That these are examples of Morgan's favourite places is significant, suggesting a link between human-human relationships and place connection. This echoes interview themes of family and self-narrative, where participants' engagements with Tasmanian forests were based in memory, human-human relationships, and connection to special places. I suggest that Morgan's choice of images suggests a love for forests, fostered by a love for special people.

Styx Valley, Morgan [edited to preserve anonymity]

The inclusion of a human figure in Riley's photograph appears to serve a very different purpose. Here, the central figure works to contrast the smallness of humans with the large scale, even majesty, of the forest's big trees. Interestingly, the image's composition is similar to the painting 'Big Tree Omnipotent' discussed above. Where the figures in Morgan's photographs serve to depict the forest as accessible, the composition of Riley's photograph positions the forest as awe-inspiring.

"Trees in coupe SX010F (part of which was subsequently logged)", Riley

Riley's contributed image has striking connotations of both classic Tasmanian wilderness photography (such as Peter Dombrovskis' work), and images used in the marketing of Tasmanian tourism experiences (indeed, this image is publicly available and distributed [e.g. Law 2015]). The dark, cool colours of the trees and ferns emphasise a strikingly 'Tasmanian-style' rainforest place; the image appears to be of a remote landscape with a human figure present, suggesting a blend of accessibility and distance that echoes many of the marketing tropes designed to capitalise on 'Tasmanian wilderness'. However, there is also a tension present in the submission of this image – a disconnection between the majesty emphasised by the scale of the composition, the image's echoing of 'wilderness' conservation campaigns, and the banality of its connotations as a marketing image. The caption of this image also clearly positions it within Tasmania's political history. The implication here is of trees (and ferns, place, and ecosystems) under threat – an awe-inspiring and beautiful space made precarious by Tasmania's political situation. That a participant has chosen such an image to represent Tasmania's forests is unsurprising, but poignant.

While these images above are the only photographs to feature human figures, nearly a third of Rowan's photographs included a walking track, implying a certain level of human presence.

Rowan

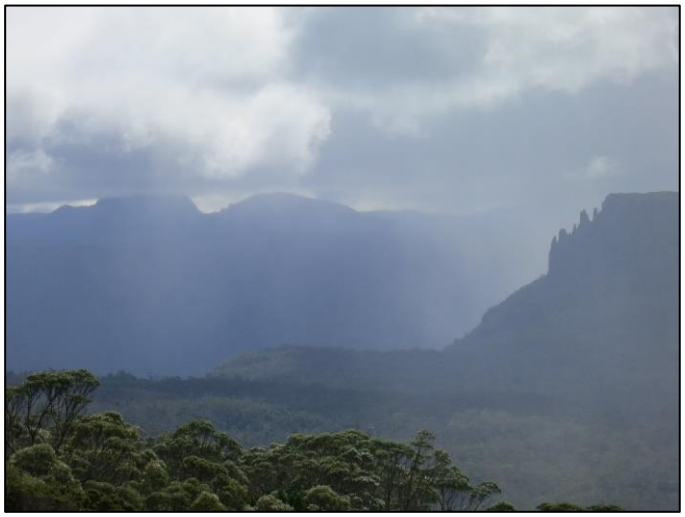
The photographs submitted by Jesse are more conventionally 'human-less': they depict rugged, large-scale landscapes featuring numerous species and topographies. Where the walking tracks of Rowan's images hint at human presence, the images that Jesse chose force the audience into a 'landscape view', where the only human presence evident is that of the photographer themselves. This is a more romantic vision of landscape (as Lara identified during her interview), and one which immerses the viewer in the forest's aesthetic appeal. I suggest that this reflects participants' common preoccupation with the demarcation of spaces, as discussed in Chapter 4. Each of these photographs discussed thus far render human influence in these spaces visible and invisible in different ways, echoing participants' (and many

Tasmanians') ambivalent responses to questions of wilderness values, access to forest spaces, and the 'boundaries' of human influence on forest spaces.

"Mount Doris looking over the Forth Valley and towards Mount Oakleigh", Jesse

"In the Labyrinth, near to Mount Geryon", Jesse

The second predominant theme of the photographic submissions is diversity. This refers to both the diversity of Tasmania's landscapes and species, and the interdependency of diverse species coexisting in the same area. Jesse explained that the images he chose were "… only a couple of photos but hopefully they capture the incredible diversity in Tassie's forests". Below is the third of Jesse's photographs.



"In the Labyrinth, near to Mount Geryon", Jesse

Rowan's collection of 30 images and captions is a particularly engrossing depiction of the diversity of Tasmania's forests. The images range from macro-scale shots of fungi and orchids, to mid-scale images of local wildlife, to landscape photography of national parks and different forest types. The included captions communicate an incredible depth of knowledge about Tasmanian forests. The following is but one example.

"**16. Trowutta Arch:** Tarkine Mycena interrupta is a small but beautiful fungi which is commonly found on dead wood in wet forests and rainforests. Probably also one of the most photographed fungi."
-Rowan

As described in previous chapters, participants' descriptions of Tasmanian forests frequently referenced ideas of diversity, complexity, small details, and iconic or endemic Tasmanian species. The diversity of participants' submitted photographs – particularly the diversity of forest types depicted – echo a comment that Ken made during his interview:

> [In] Tasmania within a very short distance… you travel for three or four hours, and you've gone through four or five different ecology systems, or natural

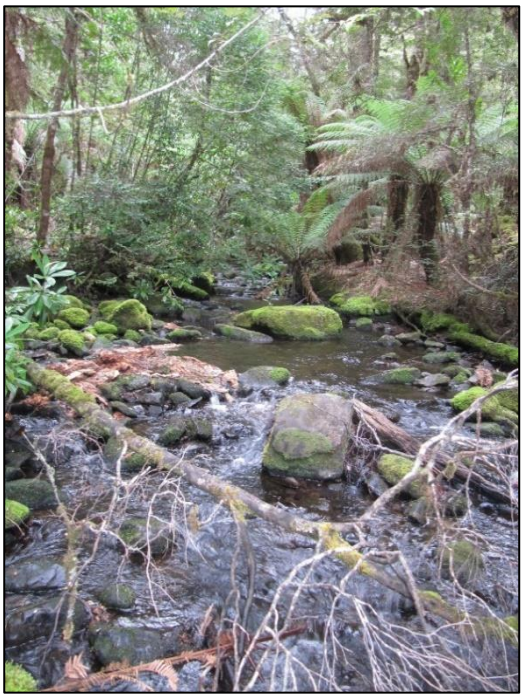
> wilderness areas, or areas of great beauty, for different reasons. Coast, mountain, forest, sweeping farmland, I mean yeah, that's been cleared, but it's very beautiful. Especially with forest in the background on the mountains.

The concept that Tasmania has a highly diverse range of ecosystems (and that the state is small enough that one is inclined to access this diversity) was a common theme broached by participants. I suspect that the diversity captured by participants' photographic submissions hints at these same ideas, and that diversity of ecosystems is a key aspect of Tasmanians' views and valuing of the state's forests.

Participants' photographs often feature multiple species in one image, and many are compositionally 'messy' and non-minimalist. By this I do not mean that they are aesthetically displeasing images, but quite the opposite; many of these photographs are not neat or sanitised, but taken from odd angles and in unclear light, and/or feature forest floor 'litter' and a lack of singular (species) focus. The connotation here is of 'naturalness', unpredictability, and untamedness. In this is an implicit depiction of interconnected, diverse species; these photographs therefore represent Tasmanian forests as complex networks of interrelated species, objects, and topographies. Again, this echoes participants' focus during interviews on the role of complexity, unpredictability, and interconnectedness in characterising Tasmanian forests, particularly insofar as these forests symbolise that which is nonhuman (and thereby inform human ontology, as discussed in Chapter 5).

The third theme of the photographic submissions – 'Tasmania' – was unsurprising, given the prompt that participants were responding to. Nevertheless, the sheer 'Tasmanian-ness' of

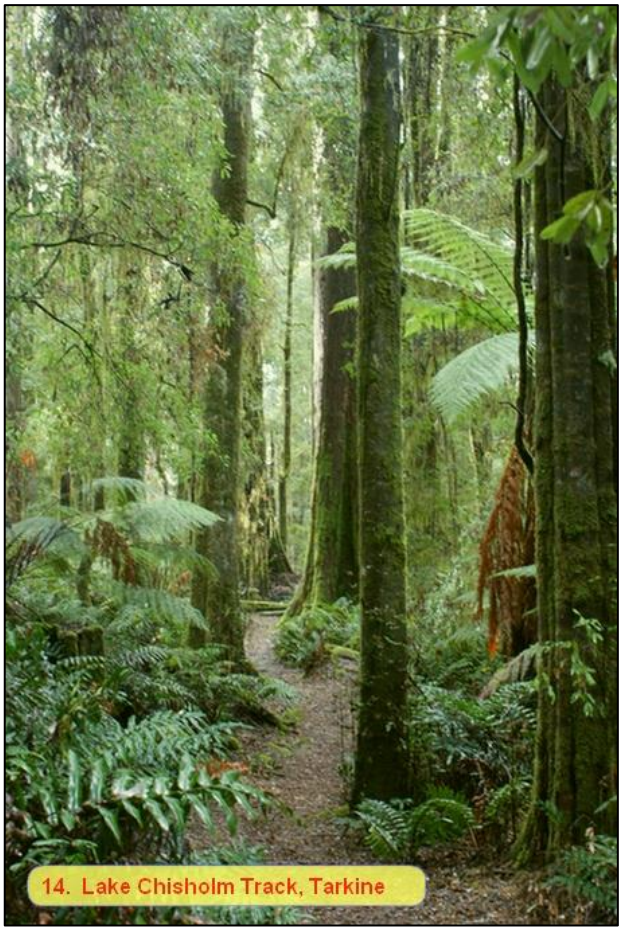
many (if not all) of the photographs represents a distinct and recognisable Tasmanian ecocultural identity. Some photographs depict iconic Tasmanian places, such Cradle Mountain and Dove Lake, the Styx Valley, and the Tarkine (takayna). Others portray Tasmanian species, including endemic species (such as the Silver Peppermint eucalypt, or Small Bird Orchid). Other images simply look warmly familiar to my local eye. As discussed in Chapter 4, the vast majority of participants had special places they were familiar with, and thought of Tasmania as a special place of which they were proud. The photographs (and, indeed, the other materials) submitted by participants seem to reflect this trend.



Clockwise from top left:
Cockatoos, Rowan; "Styx Valley", Morgan; Olive Whistler, Rowan.

Some photographs included information that contextualised the image within Tasmania's political history, with Riley's image (discussed above) being an obvious example of this link

between visual representation and Tasmanian social context. This caption (and image) provided by Rowan is similarly explicit:



"14. Lake Chisholm track: Tarkine Lake Chisholm is a limestone sinkhole surrounded by some beautiful remnant Eucalypt forest and rainforest. The Lake Chisholm Reserve is one of a number of reserves in this area of the Tarkine surrounded by clear-fell forestry activities."

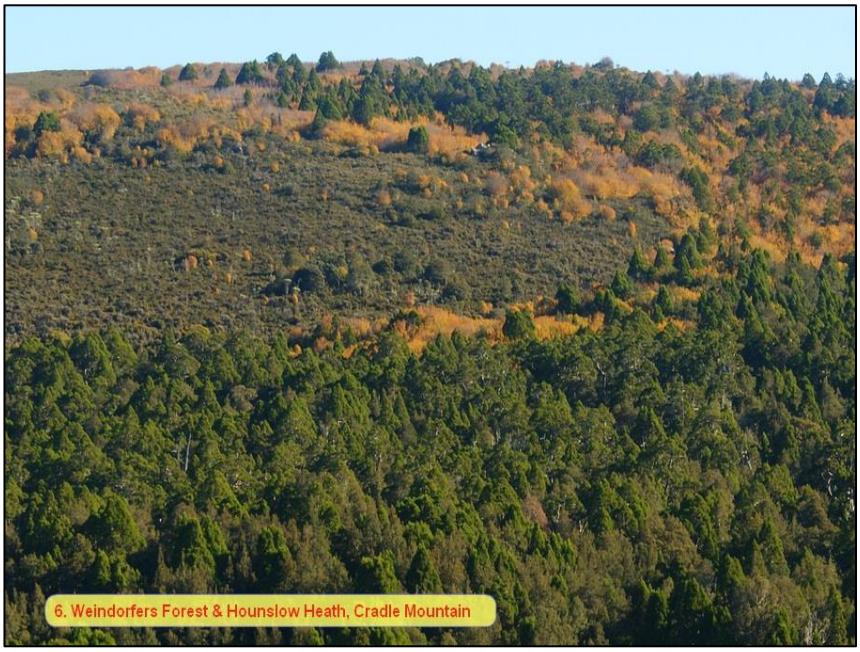
-Rowan

Further, another of Rowan's captions stated that:

> … I remember the old-growth forests that once extended along the [Dazzler Range] which have been lost to clear-fell forestry since the early 1970's. Holwell Gorge State Reserve is one of the special places that remain in the range but it has been impacted by vegetation clearing on adjacent private land over the years.

Such a statement would not have been out of place amongst the interview data, and clearly speaks to Tasmania's history as a narrative of threat to place and material constancy. As with

the interview data, it is noteworthy that participants have offered these submissions in a specific (and particularly fraught) political and historical context. Rowan also provided one further, distinctively Tasmanian aspect of representation: the "annual pilgrimage" to see Tasmania's Fagus forests.



"6. Weindorfers Forest and Hounslow Heath: Cradle Mountain National Park. Many people including me have an annual "pilgrimage" to Cradle Mountain each April to witness the autumn colours of our only native winter deciduous tree Nothofagus gunnii, known as Fagus to most people."

-Rowan

As with Marie's anecdote about visiting the Fagus (in Chapter 5), here Rowan described the marking of annual time through the material conditions of Tasmanian forests. It is significant that he referred to such a journey as a "pilgrimage" and a "witness[ing]", with these terms bearing clear connotations of ritual processes. As I have argued, such journeys not only work to inform self-narrative by contextualising external time through personal experience, but also reflect ritual-esque aspects of participants' bushwalking experiences. In this way, Rowan's photographic representation of Tasmanian Fagus forests is also a representation of a uniquely Tasmanian experience of self-narrative, liminality, and transition.

Participant submissions and ontological security

To recap, the written responses reflect (largely political) themes of the juxtaposition of forests and forestry, distrust of those in positions of decision-making, and the temporality encapsulated by Tasmanian forests. Rory's 'The Ocean in Our Blood' and Morgan's 'Risdon Prison' and 'World Heritage' speak to themes of connection to the nonhuman, the ethics and performativity of coming to the nonhuman's defence, and the ambivalent future narratives that accompany such processes. Lindsay's paintings and Charlie's poem reflect themes of 'bigger-than-human' networks and existence, and large-scale conceptualisations of time. Finally, participants' photographic submissions echo themes of human presence, boundaries, and 'wilderness'; the diversity, complexity, and interconnectedness that characterises forest spaces; and the role that Tasmania's political and material characteristics play in informing both a sense of precarity and a sense of Tasmanian identity. Considering all these themes in conjunction, it is clear that forests are not 'just trees'. These representations show Tasmanian forests to be deeply meaningful places.

The themes of the written responses speak to many of the same concepts of threat to material constancy and anticipated futures discussed in Chapter 4. The concern and sadness of these written responses reflects Ashley, Jamie, and Bobby's apprehensions about what could happen (or indeed, what is happening) to their familiar places of home and belonging, and to the nonhuman environment that could or 'should' support future wellbeing. Ashley's response most explicitly illustrates this connection with material constancy, comparing his own land (a familiar place of belonging) to state-owned forest. Here, state-owned forest is a place where the choices of others diminish what Ashley values about Tasmanian forests. His own land is

therefore representative of material constancy, but state-owned forests are representative of the loss of what makes Tasmanian forests what they are (to him): a special and sustainable material space. Preservation of home enhances ontological security, but destruction of this material constancy challenges it.

Jamie and Bobby's responses represent Tasmanian forests through quite fearful future narratives. They tied this vulnerability closely to the management of forests (and other ecosystems); it was their distrust of human approaches to the nonhuman that shaped their concerns about how the future will be. As per these responses, Bobby and Jamie's representations of Tasmanian forests are therefore representations of these forests as symbolic of the future. Rather than showing trust in the future wellbeing of humans and nonhumans alike – an experience that would enhance ontological security – the global state of human-forest interactions had diminished their sense of trust in the future, and therefore their sense of ontological security. It is significant that in writing a response to directly represent 'Tasmanian forests', Jamie, Bobby, and Ashley have each looked far beyond the mundane, trivial, or everyday, to consider their hopes for home and fears for the future.

Each of the 'other' pieces most closely reflect processes of ontological security through representing Tasmanian forests as symbolic of the nonhuman. Morgan and Rory's submissions – the story, song lyrics, and dance routine – do this by way of discussing human relationships with the nonhuman. The moral narratives of each of these texts are concerned with locating oneself (ethically) through relationship with the nonhuman, resolving matters of agency, responsibility, and interconnection. These pieces also link connection with the nonhuman to

the authors' future narratives; it is through the hope that other people will learn to 'get it' (connection with the nonhuman) that the future will be one of wellbeing. I believe that Morgan and Rory submitted these representations of Tasmanian forests to communicate their own sense of ontological understandings and future narratives through connection to the nonhuman, and that the fate of the (forest) nonhuman therefore shapes their respective experiences of ontological security.

Where the relational processes behind Morgan and Rory's texts are (for the most part) explicit, the sense of relationship behind Lindsay's paintings and Charlie's poem are more implicit. These submissions represent Tasmanian forests as symbolic of the nonhuman through the concept of the bigger-than-human, exploring themes of nonhuman life, existence, and large temporal and spatial scales. Lindsay and Charlie's submissions therefore represent Tasmanian forests as a symbol of that which contextualises the place of humans within a world that precedes and outlasts the individual. These texts are a means of 'giving language' – creative, poetic, and qualitative language – to these concepts, beyond cognitive and ideological expressions of ecocentrism, scientific discourse, or self-interest. Lindsay and Charlie have therefore represented Tasmanian forests as spaces that enhance ontological security, by means of understanding where humans 'fit'. I discussed this theme at length in Chapter 5.

The photographic representations, like the written responses, are particularly reflective of the topics that participants discussed in the interviews. Through the presence, absence, and invisibility of human figures, the photographs raise questions about the demarcation of space, and the classification of certain Tasmanian spaces as 'wild'. Of the images that lack an obvious

human presence, the implication seems to be one of escape and refuge; there is likely a human presence (the photographer), but the audience sees that the photographer has achieved privacy and autonomy. Considering participants commonly equated forest privacy with a sense of immersion and wellbeing, this lack of human presence contributes to a representation of Tasmanian forests as a site of escape and refuge. Riley's submission also communicates this impression of 'wilderness', despite featuring a human figure. That Rowan and Morgan included walking tracks as part of their photographic representations of Tasmanian forests is also significant, given the politicisation of forest access in Tasmania. As discussed in Chapter 4, whether access enhances ontological security (by way of informing self-narrative, as seen through Morgan's images of loved ones) or potentially challenges ontological security (by threatening material constancy) is very much a matter of personal perspective. Regardless, it is telling that none of the 40 photographic submissions feature crowds of unknown people. Participants have represented Tasmanian forests as places of familiarity and privacy. Participants' photographic submissions also depict Tasmanian forests as places of diversity, complexity, and interconnectedness. This supports the argument that forests are irreplaceable in their intricacy, as well as being materially precarious places. This is particularly the case in the captions which draw the reader's attention to the political conditions which have threatened the depicted areas.

As I stated in Chapter 3, the process of requesting submissions from participants resulted in a 'backwards' photo-elicitation process, in which the themes discussed in the interviews shaped the representations of Tasmanian forests that participants offered. In no text is this more evident than Robin's contribution, as her eloquent caption (describing what she sees in the

photograph) touched on many of the themes most central to this research. The image itself also reflects many of the same compositional and connotational elements as the photographs discussed above.

The attached photo goes someway to representing what Tasmanian forests mean to me. It shows a pencil pine, tall and leaning with the foliage all on one side. And all alone in the button grass plain at **Mt Field**, with the Eucalypt dominated forest a little way away. This photo appeals to me because **the tree is imperfectly symmetrical, it is isolated, it is old**. It could have succumbed to old age, disease or fire. But it hasn't and to **me it's venerable, it's a survivor, it's adapted**. And not far away is the Eucalypt forest. It is dominated by subalpine eucalypts and understory. Again, these plants have adapted to this harsh environment of strong wind, thin soils, hot sun and frost and snow. **These plants inhabit this world and they provide a home to insects, fungi, reptiles and animals, which in turn cycle nutrients back**, break down decomposing matter and distribute seed. And we can be a part of it – our playground – **our home!! This encapsulates the forest to me – venerable, surviving, adaptable. It's a message of hope for the future.**

-Robin

The bolded text in the caption is my own added emphasis, as these are the key phrases that illustrate the connection between Robin's submission, the central themes of the interview data, and ontological security. Firstly, Robin highlighted that this image is not simply of Tasmania, but of a specific, remembered site: Mt. Field, in the state's south. She then emphasised the tree's imperfection, its great age, and its survival; this echoes participants' comments that Tasmanian forests are 'natural' places, embodying the ancientness, continuity, and unpredictability of existence. Robin's caption also draws attention to the interconnection of species – that plants provide a home for insects, fungi, and reptiles, who provide a home for plants in return – mirroring the emphasis that participants placed on the complexity of Tasmanian forests. This sense of complexity, as I have argued, contributes to a sense of ontological security by acting as an illustration of the 'big picture' of human and nonhuman life. It is an understanding of existence not as a set of discrete species and parts but as a network of interconnections, of which humans are one element. As the caption then states, this network of interconnections provides a home for humans. I suspect that Robin does not simply mean 'home' as in a personally familiar place, but rather, a home – a place of belonging – for all people, by which they may locate themselves as humans.

These final sentences of Robin's caption most clearly reflect processes of ontological security:

> And we can be a part of it – our playground – our home!! This encapsulates the forest to me – venerable, surviving, adaptable. It's a message of hope for the future.

Here, Robin described Tasmanian forests as symbolic of both the nonhuman (and the continual survival of nonhuman life) and of the future. Robin's submission is a representation of Tasmanian forests as contributing to a sense of ontological security; for Robin, forests represent both the force of existence that precedes and outlasts humans, and a sense of trust in the future. Robin's message is that she feels more ontologically secure for having cultivated a relationship with the forests of Tasmania.

Conclusion

> [In expressing the] notion of a shortage of words, vocabulary, and language when it came to wanting to use verbal communication as a tool for sharing one's knowing of, or relating with, nature, participants put forth the notion of linguistic limitations … reveal[ing] a discursive struggle within a Western cultural setting of attempts to speak about meaningful forms of knowing nature and communicative hurdles to putting this knowing, or relating, into the culturally available vocabulary.
>
> Milstein (2008: 187-188)

This chapter has illustrated not only different forms of reifying and representing Tasmanian forests, but has implicated experiences and expressions of ontological security within these activities and representations. Like the environmental concerns discussed in Chapter 4, participants' written responses (and acts of building and design) focused primarily upon those local and global conditions which threaten the diminishment of ontological security. These written responses contrast quite clearly with the submitted paintings and poems, which depict different, perhaps less precarious experiences of ontological security. The story, dance, and lyrics communicate other experiences of ontological security again – experiences which are

rather more defensive and defiant. The point here is that ontological security is an individual and negotiated process.

This chapter has been primarily concerned with the problem that the above quote from Milstein (2008) identifies: the difficulties in communicating human interactions with the nonhuman, particularly in such a way that does justice to feelings of connection, awe, vulnerability, anxiety, or empathy. Sometimes, there are words (and this is evident in the findings presented in the previous two chapters). Sometimes, however, people turn to other forms and methods of communication. This chapter has explored two of these methods in 'reification' and 'representation'. These acts demonstrate that participants continued to engage with the nonhuman as part of their everyday lives outside of the forest space, illustrating the ongoing presence and significance of Tasmanian forests in their lives.

Conclusion

> I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'
>
> MacIntyre (1984: 216, in Flyvbjerg 2006: 24)

One recent afternoon, deep in thought about this very thesis, I glanced out the window and was stunned by the clouds that I saw. In the Hobart sunset they were luminescent and impossibly pink, and my first thought was that this spectacular show was strangely and inexplicably beautiful. I felt *something*. Moments later the clouds were gone; the sky dulled, and I pondered what it was that led me to wonder at clouds, to know that they hold some inarticulable significance in their transient beauty. Perhaps this seems rather much rumination for the ordinary act of cloud-gazing, but I am compelled to contemplate what that experience meant to me. I have written this thesis to better understand these moments of human-nonhuman engagement.

This chapter concludes the thesis. It opens with a brief summary of the chapters thus far, before moving on to a discussion of the emerging issue of the kunanyi (Mt. Wellington) cable car. I then outline five key 'rifts' regarding forests, forestry, and related issues in Tasmania, as illustrated by participants' experiences and understandings. Following this, I summarise the theoretical and methodological contributions of my conceptual framework (ontological security) to environmental sociology. Here, I propose answers to the research questions stated at the beginning of the thesis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the challenges,

limitations, and future research implications of this project, and a re-statement of its core argument and key contributions.

Thesis summary

I have explored human-forest engagements in Tasmania through a conceptual framework of 'ontological security'. I have done this through the establishment of the social and disciplinary context of the study; the 're-imagining' of Giddens' conceptualisation of ontological security; and a theoretical journey 'through' the forest, tracing participants' understandings and experiences before, during, and after their time in Tasmanian forests.

Part 1 (Chapters 1-3) established the context, approach, and methodology of the project. It established that the trends and patterns of environmental sociology literature – largely macro-level, realist, and quantitative in approach – present an insufficient framework through which to understand human-forest engagements in Tasmania. The Tasmanian case study – indeed, human-nonhuman interactions globally – requires an understanding of the emotional, existential, and ambivalent elements of experience, connection, and conflict. A remodelling of Giddens' 'ontological security' begins this work. Semi-structured interviews, and a participant-led method of gathering 'representations', are effective methods through which to access and illustrate individual's experiences of ontological security.

Part 2 contained three findings and discussion chapters: 'Before the Forest' (Chapter 4), 'In the Forest' (Chapter 5), and 'After the Forest' (Chapter 6). I chose these titles to invoke the spatial and temporal elements of human-forest engagements, establishing that the significance of

forest experiences is not limited to 'in the moment' interactions. Chapter 4 detailed participants' understandings of Tasmanian forests, including definitions and the identification of special places; environmental concerns; concerns about forestry politics, management, and practices in Tasmania; and understandings of boundaries, access, and demarcation of forest spaces in the state. Chapter 5 explored participants' experiences with/in Tasmania's forests, and the relationship between these experiences and participants' feelings of safety, emotional connection, wellbeing, self-narrative, ontology, and the future. Chapter 6 illustrated the ongoing effects of Tasmanian forests in participants' everyday lives. The responses of participants throughout these three chapters draw on each of the elements of my model of ontological security. This indicates that ontological security is an appropriate framework through which to understand and demonstrate the emotional and existential significance of Tasmanian forests in participants' lives.

Going Forward

> I remember Peter Dombrovskis, he published a book called *The Mountain*. And he said, every morning - and I think it's really true for *so many* people - every morning, so many people get up and they look to [Mt. Wellington], as the first thing they do, you know? And it's a sort of anchor ... 'oh what's the weather gonna be?', you look up at the mountain - is there snow on it? Is there, you know, the wind whipping the clouds past? Is it dreamy and blue? And I think a lot of people look up to the mountain, and they remember themselves walking on it, they connect with a nice, calm, peaceful, enjoyable time, so it gives them some input like that ... it's a reference point. (Marie)

> ... it's not that Jesus says 'money is the root of all evil', it's the love of money. There's such a difference. And there seems to be this warped mentality in

> homo sapien that immediately, a buck is to be made, we just go for it. We're blind. (Reg)

Reg's comment regarding the love of money provides an astute framing of one of the key findings of this research: participants were not necessarily opposed to a Tasmanian forestry industry per se, but they were largely opposed to the state's forestry industry in its historical and present forms. It is not money, nor forestry, that is the 'root of all evil'; rather, participants were concerned with the rapacious and underhanded practices that so often mark industrialised approaches to the nonhuman.

What does the future hold for Tasmania's forests, mountains, rivers – and the people who are invested in these spaces and places? Since beginning this research project in late 2015, the prospect of a cable car development on kunanyi (Mt. Wellington) has become increasingly feasible and contentious. While developers have for decades pitched various proposals for a cable car in Hobart (O'Connor 2017), the Mount Wellington Cableway Company's (MWCC) recent tender seems the most likely to gain approval. Proponents claim that the cable car (and accompanying developments at the mountain's peak) will be a boon for the state's tourism industry, allowing unhindered access to the summit – particularly during snowfall, as the current road (presently the only vehicle access to the summit) closes at times during the winter months. Others – such as conservation, community, and political groups, including the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and the Tasmanian Greens – have raised concerns about the environmental, visual, and cultural impacts of the cable car and its associated developments. In May 2018, a crowd of thousands gathered to protest the proposal (Ross 2018); during the October 2018 Hobart City Council elections, the cable car featured prominently as a key issue

for many voters (MacDonald 2018). Once again, a divisive environmental issue is shaping Hobart – if not Tasmania – with a consistent framing of 'us versus them'.

The emergence of this matter during the course of my research limits the extent to which I can comment on the implication of the cable car development for Tasmanians' forest experiences, and their experiences of ontological security. However, the cable car issue strikes me as alarmingly reminiscent of past environmental conflicts in Tasmania. It features many of the same elements of divisiveness and dichotomised conflict – founded on many of the same claims, complaints, and contentions – that have characterised the state's forestry conflicts. In following the cable car story, I have noticed several parallels with forestry issues:

- A heavy emphasis on division, with the cable car conflict framed as a matter of diametrically-opposed 'sides'. This was evident during the Hobart City Council elections, where a number of candidates ran on platforms that explicitly stated their support for or opposition to the cable car.
- A tendency for colloquial conversations about the cable car to dissolve into complaints about those with concerns being 'anti-progress', 'anti-everything', or 'naysayers'. Such dismissal of concerns reflects a long-entrenched discourse that associates 'progress' and 'reason' with instrumental and industrialised relationships with the nonhuman.
- A personalised and emotive framing of opposition to the cable car as a movement to 'save *our* mountain'. This appeal to pride, belonging, and responsibility echoes a common theme in participants' descriptions of Tasmanian forests, and their reasons for supporting conservation actions.

- A marginalisation of Tasmanian Aboriginal voices during relevant debates and processes of decision-making (Ogilvie 2018a).
- A sense of fervour amongst proponents regarding the apparent economic benefits of the cable car. Over the past 12 months, this has regularly reminded me of the insistence by many Tasmanians that forestry is an essential industry for the state's economic wellbeing, despite the financial issues mentioned in Chapter 1.
- Allegations of corruption and a lack of transparency in the development of MWCC's proposal and community consultation (Ross 2018). As discussed in Chapter 1 – and echoed in participants' responses – concerns about the relationship between Tasmanian politics, extractive industry, and tourism developments have a long history in Tasmania.
- The significance of access, development, and perceptions of 'pristine-ness' to arguments for and against the cable car. Two large transmission towers already grace the summit – does their presence justify or condemn further development? Is access to the summit a right of all people, regardless of weather conditions or fitness levels – or should access to some parts of the state be considered a privilege? If further moves are made to block the development, might politicians begin to refer to this as 'locking up the summit', echoing the rhetoric of 'locked up' forests?

I draw out these parallels to make the point that the cable car issue highlights similar discursive antagonisms and power inequalities as forestry issues have done in the past (and continue to do so). This suggests that many of the issues and disagreements that have long plagued Tasmania are likely to persist.

The concern that Tasmania's environmental future may resemble its past has shaped this inquiry. In the early stages of this project, I focused primarily and narrowly upon the state's forestry conflicts. I wondered about the role that different forms and experiences of ontological security might play in the perpetuation of these conflicts – how might one person's pursuit of ontological security undermine another's, thereby creating division? As I thought about ontological security more deeply, however, I came to suspect that this Tasmanian case study is better understood as an illustration of much broader questions of human-forest interactions. Put simply, the 'forestry wars' need not be the only topic of conversation regarding Tasmania and its forests. Tasmanians (and indeed, people globally) need new ways of articulating and approaching human-nonhuman engagements. Through a framework of ontological security, I have proposed one way that these new conversations could take place. As such, the contribution of this research is in two parts: a contribution of a sociological perspective of the Tasmanian case study, and a contribution of a reworked model of ontological security, which demonstrates the concept's utility for qualitative research in environmental sociology.

I will return to this second contribution later in this chapter. First, I explore several rifts and dissonances in Tasmanian society that participants have highlighted. I have chosen the term 'rift' to indicate that these are some of the ways by which Tasmanians are 'split'; where divisions occur in the gaps created by miscommunication and misunderstandings, and where the barriers created by hegemonic values and power imbalances obscure key aspects of forest experiences. The identification and analysis of these rifts contributes a sociological perspective

to the Tasmanian case study, and broadly addresses two questions. Firstly, what is being (mis)communicated in Tasmania, resulting in so many people in the state remaining unable to see eye-to-eye? Secondly, what does a focus on concepts of ontology, relationship, and emotion contribute to analyses of the Tasmanian case study? These are also significant questions for understandings of human-nonhuman engagements and conflicts more generally and globally; as Krien (2012: 297) puts it, "If ever there was a canary at the bottom of the world, it is Tasmania". Identifying these rifts constitutes my recommendations to the forestry elites, policy-makers, and public of Tasmania – not as a prescription of actions to be taken, as such, but as a suggestion of the dimensions of human-forest engagements that must be more effectively incorporated into existing policy and Tasmanian enviro-political discourse.

Rift 1: The problem with sides

While popular and political discourses have heavily relied on the depiction of forestry conflicts as a matter of two diametrically-opposed 'sides', this does not accurately reflect Tasmanians' views of forest management and forestry practices. The concept of 'sides' is useful as shorthand analysis and understanding of the conflicts, but it is also a divisive and alienating approach.

Undermining the assumptions inherent in dichotomised conflict creates a space for greater acknowledgement of the realities of individual's positions, attitudes, opinions, and concerns. In light of participants' responses, I argue that in Tasmania, opposition to forestry is often tinged with ambivalence, and is largely oriented towards practices and organisations. This is an important distinction from constructions of conflict which describe that conflict as

opposition between individuals, stereotyped groups of people, or vaguely-labelled 'others'. Exploring the nuances of Tasmanians' forestry concerns may therefore contribute to better human-to-human relationships in Tasmania. Undermining the concept of dichotomised conflict also allows for a conversational shift towards the restructuring of forestry practices and management, rather than seeing dialogue derailed by assumptions that those with concerns are 'anti-everything', or wish to see the entire industry dismantled.

Rift 2: Distrust and precarity

Participants displayed an almost unanimous distrust of Forestry Tasmania's management and practices, particularly regarding economic decisions and the sustainability of clearfelling and woodchipping. Further, participants tended expressed a lack of faith in politicians – particularly past Labor politicians, and past and current Liberal politicians – not to exploit social division for political gain (let alone attempt to solve the issues in question). This sense of distrust extended to the perceived permeability of spatial boundaries in Tasmania, yet participants tended to be ambivalent about issues of access to forest spaces.

A framework of ontological security clarifies the relationship between these feelings of distrust, and more general feelings of precarity and concern for the future. Forestry issues in Tasmania are part of a bigger picture of global environmental concerns, and experiences of contingency and precarity. Dismissal or lack of acknowledgment of these concerns (by politicians or industry figures) will likely contribute to further division and misunderstandings.

Participants' concerns regarding the permeability of boundaries indicates a possible mismatch in how different Tasmanians are viewing space. Where some see the need to 'hold strong' the boundaries designed to demarcate space, others treat these boundaries as inconveniences or barriers. I suggest that this is a keen difference between the perceptions of space held by conservationist groups in Tasmania, and industry groups and (particularly Liberal) politicians. I am not suggesting that the boundary lines designed by humans are immutable, or correlate directly with some kind of 'natural order' of nonhuman spaces. My point here is simply that there appear to be mixed messages in Tasmania concerning the permeability and significance of boundary lines, which in turn contribute to a concomitant sense of social division. The Lake Malbena case, briefly discussed in Chapter 5, provides a contemporary example of such misunderstandings (Carlyon 2018; Coulter 2018), as does the kunanyi cable car issue. On a related point, I argue that there is also a need for Tasmanians (politicians, industry figures, and members of the public alike) to think more critically about the Western/consumerist view of convenient access to 'wilderness' as a (paying) individual's right.

When participants spoke of Tasmania as place, most common were themes of global uniqueness, the good fortune of living in the state, and the diversity of the island's ecosystems. These themes connote a sense of Tasmania as a refuge; a special corner in a world that is increasingly changing and degrading. Such a sense of pride and gratitude is surely welcome news to those who wish to unite Tasmanians and/or market the state to those living elsewhere. These very characteristics perceived by participants, however – characteristics of refuge and distinction – depend upon Tasmania's globalised interconnection with other places and practices. Arguments that Tasmania has a high percentage of forest cover relative to other

places – whilst true – indicate the precarity of global forest cover, just as much as they indicate careful management of Tasmania. Put simply, decision-makers need to consider environmental practices in Tasmania as located within a context of global environmental concerns. There is an intimate connection between global and local environmental concerns, and economic and management decisions need to also consider global structures and patterns.

Tasmania does not exist in a vacuum. I argue that differences of spatial perspective can lead to differences in opinion regarding Tasmanian forestry politics, and acknowledging this may lead to greater interpersonal understandings.

Rift 3: Power and grief

Participants shared stories of anger, despair, and grief in response to witnessing events of forest degradation (or forest devastation, depending on perspective). Some participants expressed great sorrow through emotive language; others more implicitly shared their feelings through the articulation of fears and concerns about human actions committed against Tasmanian forests. These stories reflect the wealth of literature discussing emotional responses to the nonhuman.

Drawing on theorists such as Barry (2012) and Ahmed (2004), it is clear that experiences of vulnerability and grief expose the power dynamics that structure that vulnerability. To describe grief and vulnerability as political and power-laden is not ground-breaking; my point, however, is that it is problematic to overlook the impact of this process in Tasmanian society. Whose and which reactions to forest degradation are valid, and who makes the decisions that directly

precipitate that degradation? In Tasmania, the 'forestry elite' – those in the most powerful positions of decision-making (see Chapter 4) – have historically shown little concern for the characteristics of individual forests, nor the experiences of those humans who grieve for these places. In this thesis I have referred to emotional experiences such as solastalgia (Albrecht et al. 2007), environmental grief (Cunsolo & Ellis 2018), and vulnerability. If these experiences remain underacknowledged in Tasmania – alongside the power dynamics that structure the visibility and validation of these experiences – there will continue to be significant social division.

Addressing the psychological and philosophical dimensions of insecurity, Howard (1999: 59-60) provocatively argues:

> Insecurity may be exhilarating for those who are confident and competent enough to stay on top. But what of those who keep getting swept under? … The left focuses on these casualties, or victims, those who lost in the race to security. It seeks measures to support and protect them. The right pays more attention to winners, those who seized opportunities and won despite the odds. It seeks to encourage the rest of us to be similarly brave.

While I appreciate Howard's measured recognition of the underdog, part of the problem in Tasmania is this very polarisation of sides; the notion that to recognise and accept human vulnerability in relation to the state's forests is to subscribe to a maligned political narrative of 'Green leftism'. Nonetheless, I align myself with the interests of these 'victims', as Howard puts it, and propose the acknowledgement – at the academic level, if not in state policy – that emotional engagements with Tasmania's forests are reflective of problematic, hegemonic

power structures that malign some, re-entrench the authority of others, and result in poor environmental outcomes for many.

Rift 4: Special places

The descriptions of participants' 'special' places were broader than I had anticipated. Participants' responses certainly featured iconic and well-known places (such as Cradle Mountain and Mt. Field), yet they also referred to lesser-known places as special: unnamed places, lost or precarious places, and places that were local to the participant and seemingly unremarkable. This suggests that at community and policy-levels, there needs to be a broader recognition of what Tasmanians value about forest spaces, including what constitutes a 'special place'.

It is clearly not possible to heed every Tasmanian's wishes and values regarding forest places (not least because different people will locate different and competing meanings in any given space). A broader recognition of what a treasured place is, however, may result in more comprehensive and productive conversations about Tasmanians' forest engagements. Proposals for recreational developments, road and track access, and forestry practices should also take these nuanced relationships and valuations into account. This may encourage policies that recognise diverse interests, identities, and place connections (including those of disempowered groups, such as Aboriginal Tasmanians). The very diversity of these interests does complicate matters; the interests and values of a 4WD group, for example, are likely to conflict with those of bushwalkers, or those concerned with the conservation of Aboriginal heritage. However, moves to undermine assumptions that a Tasmanian place is only valuable

for its economic and/or iconic status would contribute to an eroding of the very power structures that perpetuate forestry conflicts. As with the rift of 'power and grief', here there is significance in reimagining human-forest interactions so as to privilege non-destructive, non-capitalist approaches, and understand these relationships as *mutually* beneficial.

Rift 5: Irreplaceable forests

Finally, forests are not 'just trees'. This has been the central argument of this thesis, and participants' responses expressed this sentiment in a multitude of ways. Many people, including most participants, perceive forests as 'more than the sum of their parts': delicate, but enduring; complex and built upon countless interconnections; and symbolic of that which is not human but encompasses and locates human lives. As I have argued, forests are symbolic of that which informs a sense of ontological security.

However, such abstract notions can be incredibly difficult to articulate, resulting in an underappreciation of what forests potentially 'do' for people. Personal and emotional experiences can also be difficult to communicate to those who may not relate to such feelings. As I referenced above, Kidner (2012: 235) argues that dominant economic/Western systems render such experiences "invisible". As such, research that explores and celebrates emotional human-nonhuman interactions operates as one way to 'give language' to the unspoken and unseen. In this case, as Claire put it, it is a chance to share "one opinion of many that can kind of showcase … love for" Tasmanian forests.

For many people, including many Tasmanians, forests are irreplaceable due to their complexity, systems of interconnectedness, and the roles that they play in human lives. Recognising this interpretation of forests – and the desire to protect them – as legitimate and reasonable undermines discourse that would dismiss such positions as irrational, regressive, or 'anti-progress'. Barry (2012: 40; original emphasis) argues that:

> [Some] of the *resistance to* green ideas … can be understood to be motivated, I think, by a resistance to the imputed 'pre-political' (and 'pre-modern') concerns of green politics. In seeking to literally bring thinking about politics 'back down to earth', in making central to politics our fundamental relations (material as well as mental) with the non-human world, my sense is post-Enlightenment forms of thinking instinctively rebel and resist what they perceive as an anti-Enlightenment attempt to 'pull us back' to the past. How else can we explain the frequency (and predictability) with which discussion of green politics descend into it being viewed (and dismissed) as a romantic-inspired attempt to revive some pre-modern, Arcadian, craft-based idyll?

It is a hallmark of the polarisation of Tasmanian environmental politics that appreciation of forest spaces (or 'green ideas', as Barry puts it) is frequently dismissed as 'anti-progress'. In opposition to this, I argue that it makes sense to care about the places and species that inform human lives. Academics, policy-makers, forestry workers, and everyday people alike need to think more carefully about what forests potentially symbolise, and contribute to the lives of many individuals. In doing so, Tasmanian human-human and human-forest relationships alike may begin to take more harmonious, respectful forms. There is also strength in acknowledging

that where emotional connections to forests stand as a form of resistance to industrialised modes of human-nonhuman relations, this resistance is already occurring – whether hegemonically valued or not – through the everyday interactions between Tasmanians and their forests.

Questions, answers, and implications

This final point above regarding the irreplaceability of forests alludes to the fundamental argument of this inquiry: for many Tasmanians, the state's forests are deeply ontologically and emotionally significant, and the model of 'ontological security' proposed in this thesis provides an insightful framework through which to explore and express this significance. Put simply, forests are not 'just trees' (and bushwalking is not 'just walking'); human engagement with the nonhuman is never incidental, ahistorical, or inconsequential. Here I return to the research questions stated in the thesis' introductory chapter.

1. In what ways are human-forest engagements implicated in the establishment and experience of a sense of ontological security?

Ontological security is a subjunctive state of being, experienced at the point of contact with that which symbolises a reflexive acceptance of the past and an assurance of the future. This is operationalised through six key points: forests as symbolic of material constancy; routine and ritual; escape and refuge; self-narrative; the nonhuman; and the future. This thesis has demonstrated that human-forest interactions can contribute to a sense of ontological security *if* the individual interprets the forest as fulfilling (any or all) these criteria, in such a way that the individual experiences a sense of ease, hope, comfort, and confidence. This experience is

evident in the responses of many of the study's participants, who expressed a sense of fulfillment of these six points, within the context of Tasmanian forests.

Parallel to this, human-forest engagements can contribute to a sense of ontological *in*security, insofar as ontological insecurity is the experience of the diminishment of these qualities of acceptance and assurance. This is evident in the experiences of participants who expressed diminishment of ontological security, such as feeling less hopeful, less assured, and less connected to the past. Participants expressed these sentiments when faced with environmental degradation, unsustainable practices, moderated forest access, destruction and loss of special places, and a loss of intimate connection with forest spaces.

2. In what ways are Tasmanian forests symbolic of (that which contributes to a sense of) ontological security?

This thesis has demonstrated that Tasmanian forests are symbolic of (that which contributes to a sense of) ontological security, through being symbolic of the six key points listed above. Table 6 below summarises the main themes and topics that participants spoke about in relation to each key point. The materials submitted by participants as representations of Tasmanian forests also reflected these themes and topics.

	Participants expressed interpretations of Tasmanian forests as signifying…
Material constancy	a sense of home, belonging, familiarity, and as a material manifestation of place-based identity.
Routine and ritual	routines that help establish a trusting relationship with the nonhuman, a sense of safety, and familiarity; participants also interpreted Tasmanian forests as signifying rituals which contextualise the passing of time in safe and beneficial ways.

Escape and refuge	a sense of escape and refuge from the pressures and surveillances of the contemporary built world, granting a sense of autonomy, privacy, and wellbeing.
Self-narrative	important elements of their own personal biography and trajectory.
The nonhuman	nonhuman species, ecosystems, and abstract conceptions of life and ontology, contributing to an ability to locate and identify oneself in a 'bigger-than-human' network of existence.
The future	the possible futures of both forest spaces and the planet more generally, contextualising hopes and fears related to human vulnerability.

Table 6. Ontological security as expressed by participants

a. How do Tasmanians' understandings of the state's forests reflect and sustain a sense of ontological security?

The narratives, opinions, memories, and concerns detailed in Chapter 4 illustrate that participants broadly understood Tasmanian forests as:

- Multifaceted in definition
- Special, unique, and/or diverse places
- Implicated in environmental concerns, on a global and local scale
- Largely mismanaged by Forestry Tasmania, and used as a political pawn
- Under threat and/or diminished by past and current forestry practices
- Ambivalently implicated in issues of human intervention and 'pristine nature', reflecting the influence of the 'human-nature' binary in Western thinking
- Precariously bounded and contentiously accessed places

These understandings primarily reflected elements of material constancy, escape and refuge, and the future, particularly regarding the ways that environmental degradation and unsustainable practices threaten to diminish the fulfillment of these qualities.

b. How do Tasmanians experience the state's forests as ontologically significant spaces? In what ways are emotional and relational experiences implicated in this process?

The recollections, stories, emotions, and connections detailed in Chapter 5 illustrate that participants broadly experienced Tasmanian forests as:

- Places that evoke emotional experiences of joy, awe, and/or grief
- Places of beauty, privacy, and wonder, with/in which to seek a sense of immersion and wellbeing
- Playing a role in the establishment of a consistent self-narrative, and expectations of the (embodied) future
- A means of contextualising and affirming thoughts and feelings about their place, as a human, in the 'big picture' of life and time

Each of these themes reflect experiences of emotion and/or relationship, which answer participants' questions – both explicitly and implicitly – about what it means to be themselves, and what it means to be a human. In this way, participants' experiences often indicated a sense of their experiencing Tasmanian forests as ontologically significant spaces, lending credence to the argument that ontological security is an appropriate framework through which to understand human-forest engagements. Conceptually, ontological security is an important addition to qualitative environmental micro-sociology, as it illustrates and privileges aspects of human experience that other model, theories, and approaches overlook. Ontological

security highlights the significance of emotional and relational aspects of human-forest engagements, and foregrounds the forest itself as a 'participant' in this social process.

Implications and conclusions

A potential limitation of this study lies in the risk of repeating the mistakes of other writers in depicting ontological security as a vague, 'catch-all' concept. The six operationalised points potentially compound this issue, as the model of ontological security developed in this research gathers together multiple themes, concepts, and practices. However, ontological security is a highly abstract, non-conscious process, and its operationalisation is necessarily multidimensional. The themes and concepts implicated in such a model of ontological security – such as materiality, routine and ritual, wilderness and demarcated space, self-narrative, the nonhuman as 'something bigger', and vulnerability – each explain only aspects of the Tasmanian case study, or of the significance of human-forest interactions. Brought together as an operationalised model of ontological security, each concept illustrates more by virtue of its position within a broader framework; like a forest, an operationalised model of ontological security is more than the sum of its parts. Ontological security is a useful framework in implicating emotion in social processes (Harries 2016), and allows for the privileging of underexplored aspects of human-forest engagements in Tasmania.

Despite this broadness, the utility of ontological security when applied empirically will vary. For example, it had greater utility in explaining the experiences of some participants than others. As discussed in Chapter 3, there were outlying participants in this regard – those who did not speak at length about recreational forest experiences, were not forthcoming in

expressing emotional experiences or empathetic connections with forests, and were more inclined to discuss politics and the intricacies of silviculture. From this I conclude that a framework of ontological security best illustrates the understandings and experiences of those who engage in embodied and emotional experiences with/in forests; feel they have an ethical/empathetic or admiring relational connection with forests; and/or closely associate human wellbeing and/or ontology with forest wellbeing. I suspect that early socialisation in and around forests (such as bushwalking as a child) plays a significant part in forming these ontological and existential connections with forests. This conclusion reflects the greater depth and illustration of ontological security offered by Chapter 5 than that offered by Chapter 4. Put simply, ontological security is primarily to do with emotion, embodiment, and existential matters.

The participants of this study tended to be older, 'middle-class', and live in Hobart's surrounds. They also tended to be conservationist-minded, critical of Forestry Tasmania, and seemed likely to locate a sense of ontological security in their understandings and experiences of Tasmanian forests as symbolic of endurance, identity, wellbeing, and ontological meaning. As the aim of this research has been to explore and legitimise the experiences of individuals, these trends within the sample are not problematic. This could, however, signpost avenues of future research. Ontological security provides a form of language to explain why individuals care about forests, in ways that are potentially intelligible to many kinds of people. These factors do not (necessarily) obey the typical identity lines drawn in Tasmania, identified in Chapter 1 (such as 'rural or urban', 'Green or Liberal', 'logger or protester', or 'pro-forestry or anti-forestry'). A forestry worker could experience an embodied connection with a forest, and

associate human wellbeing and ethics with healthy forest ecosystems, just as an urban-dwelling office-worker could also.

The methods of advertising and recruitment that I employed in this study (as outlined in Chapter 3) contributed to the patterns of characteristics that the participants of this research possess. Recruiting and speaking with different people, who pursue and experience ontological security in different ways, could be fruitful for understanding human-nonhuman engagements – particularly given that not every individual experiences ecosystems such as forests in positive ways. For example, speaking exclusively to Tasmanians living in rural areas could extend the insights of this model of ontological security; while I am unconvinced that the high response rate from the south of the state meaningfully shaped the present research findings, Tasmanians living in different areas potentially encounter differing circumstances and places that could subsequently shape their experiences of ontological security. Similarly, speaking with those raised in large metropolitan areas could prove interesting, particularly in investigating the role of early socialisation in the construction of ontological security. Interviewing a younger sample (and/or those without children) could also produce interesting insights, given the themes of embodied aging and future generations that emerged through participants' responses. Otherwise, a change in method – in which informal interviews are conducted during and/or after a shared bushwalk between the researcher and participant – could offer a more embodied and performative exploration of ontological security (see also Nettleton 2015). In shifting the focus from what humans *think* about and do *to* the nonhuman world towards considerations of how humans and nonhumans co-constructively interact, ontological security therefore contributes to the emerging body of research exploring the

dynamic interplay of micro-sociological theory and environmental sociology (Brewster & Puddephatt 2017), and the vast array of human experiences *with* the nonhuman. The conceptual framework developed in this thesis insists on the exploration of the sheer fluidity and vitality of these human-nonhuman relationships.

Just as the insights offered by ontological security are 'transferrable' to understandings of the experiences of different people, the concept could also be used to understand human-nonhuman engagements as they relate to ecosystems other than forests. Finally, I suggest that the model of ontological security proposed in this thesis could offer useful and timely insights into individuals' concerns and experiences of climate change. Similar to Norgaard's (2006) work, the application of ontological security could expand sociological understandings of the processes driving climate change resistance, denial, action, and despair. The implication of emotional experience in these processes – as afforded by a framework of ontological security – is also essential (Brugger et al. 2013: 12). As Harries (2016: 3) puts it:

> The desire for ontological security mostly operates outside of consciousness … [and so its impact] is largely hidden. This impact is brought into the open here by revealing the rationality behind attitudes and behaviors that might otherwise appear irrational and by suggesting new considerations for the promotion of risk-reducing adaptations.

This is to say, a framework of ontological security legitimises and illuminates what is hidden, difficult to articulate, emotional and/or seemingly irrational about the human condition of living in contingency. By demonstrating how ontological security can operate within qualitative environmental micro-sociology, this research contributes a model that has application to the

exploration of a variety of contemporary human-nonhuman engagements. Given the uncertain environmental future humans are facing, these insights are becoming ever more critical.

A framework of ontological security has helped me to not only seek answers, but to more carefully frame the questions that environmental sociologists need to ask. How do humans live under contingent circumstances? Why might a person love the nonhuman, cry for the forest, only to face dismissal, aggression, and alienation – and where is the forest in all of this? In Tasmania, it is easy to forget the fleeting, existential moments that occur between humans and their forests – but these moments are an integral part of Tasmania and Tasmanian forests. In questioning the dominant discourses that have shaped the state's environmental history, this research has contributed a new perspective to the Tasmanian case study; in diverging from environmental sociology's typical approaches, this thesis also takes its place amongst the emerging appreciation of micro-scale, qualitative, and emotional understandings of human lives and vulnerability. It also illustrates the potential of ontological security in pursuing such inquiries, including understanding those human-forest engagements grounded in vulnerability, emotion, ontological questions, and interconnectedness. This thesis is an acknowledgement of these relationships and these forests, in a world that too often demands their silence.

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Appendix One

This timeline provides an overview of many of the major events and interactions of Tasmania's environmental political history over the past century. I have placed a particular focus on those events discussed in the body of the thesis.

Year	Event
1916	The first Tasmanian reserves (and eventual national parks) are established at Mt Field and Freycinet (Buckman 2008).
1950	1523 hectares of forested area is excised from Mt Field National Park (Buckman 2008).
1955	Lake Pedder National Park is created (Buckman 2008).
1960s-1972	The Lake Pedder campaign 'kicks off' the modern forestry conflicts in Tasmania. The lake is flooded in 1972 for the Gordon River power developments (Lester 2007).
1972	The United Tasmania Group is formed in response to the Lake Pedder conflict and flooding (Milne 2006). The UTG is widely considered the world's first Greens party, and splinters into the Tasmanian Greens (officially formed as such in 1992). The national Australian Greens party is also formed in 1992 (Lohrey 2002).
1974	The first Tasmanian "campaign against woodchipping is mounted at Meander" in the state's North (Buckman 2008: 233)
Late 1970s-1983	The campaign to preserve the Franklin River begins following the Lake Pedder campaign. The Franklin River blockade starts in 1982 (Buckman 2008).

	The Franklin River gains World Heritage Area (WHA) listing in December 1982 and the federal World Heritage Properties Conservation Act is passed in 1983. Following the State Government's unsuccessful High Court appeal, compensation is paid to the state government and the Franklin River is saved from damming (Lester 2007: 165).
1976	The Tasmanian Wilderness Society is formed (Buckman 2008).
1985-1988	Major campaigns and blockades occur at Farmhouse Creek and Lemonthyme (Lester 2007; Buckman 2008). Much of the area is eventually added to WHA, and the state forestry industry is compensated for its loss (Lester 2007: 165).
1992-1993	Blockades at East Picton (in the state's south) stop forestry work for "almost three months. However, within ten weeks of the blockade finishing, the forests had been clearfelled" (Lester 2007: 165).
1993	A homemade bomb (without detonator) is found beneath the Black River Bridge in the state's north-west. Due to the presence of a banner reading 'Save the Tarkine: Earth First', the bomb was attributed to conservationist groups; the resulting media attention possibly impacts on the Tasmanian Greens' election bid. Police later clear environmentalist groups of wrongdoing, with suggestions that the bomb could have been a hoax designed to discredit conservationist groups (Krien 2012).
1995-1996	A conservationist campaign is launched in response to the building of a road through the area. The road is ostensibly for tourism, but campaigners worry that it could be used for

	forestry. Much of the area is eventually placed in reserve in 2005 (Lester 2007).
1997	The Regional Forest Agreement is signed, which is "disappointment to the conservation movement because it results in inadequate forest reservation and abolishes the state woodchip limit" (Buckman 2008: 237).
2002-2005	The Styx Valley becomes a site of intense activism focusing on clearfelling practices. In 2005, the state and federal governments promise to place approximately half of the area under reserve, with Prime Minister John Howard suggesting that "only 'the unreasonable' would not be satisfied" with such an outcome. Environmentalist groups such as The Wilderness Society and the Greens "remain unsatisfied". (Lester 2007: 166).
2003->	A private meeting is held between Deputy Premier Paul Lennon and Gunns Ltd CEO John Gay. The two are "overheard discussing a new proposal to build a pulp mill in Tasmania" (Beresford 2015: 11). This meeting precedes a long chapter in Tasmania's environmental conflicts, with the proposed Tamar pulp mill inciting huge community backlash, questions of government corruption, and the infamous Gunns 20 case (2004-2006) (Beresford 2015).
2003	The tree known as 'El Grande'- Australia's largest, and the world's largest flowering plant - is confirmed dead, after being burnt by a Forestry Tasmania burn-off (Lester 2007).

2006	The Camp Florentine blockade is established by conservationist group Still Wild Still Threatened.
2007	Alana Beltram's 'Weld Angel' protest takes place. Legal proceedings (including claims for compensation from Forestry Tasmania) follow (SMH 2007).
2011	The Triabunna pulp mill site is sold to environmentalists (Beresford 2015). The Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement (TFIA) – a $277 million State and Federal Government-funded package to "support the forest industry to progressively transition to a more sustainable and diversified footing" – is signed by Prime Minister Gillard and Premier Giddings (Commonwealth of Australia 2013).
2011-2013	In the Styx Valley, Miranda Gibson – a Still Wild Still Threatened member – engages in Australia's longest tree-sit (commonly known as the 'ObserverTree'). Gibson descends in March 2013 after 451 days due to the threat of a nearby bushfire (ABC 2013).
2012	Camp Florentine destroyed in an arson attack (ABC 2012). Gunns Ltd. goes into receivership (Beresford 2015).
2013	Gunns Ltd. goes into liquidation (Beresford 2015). The Tasmanian Forests Agreement Act (TFA) is signed into legislature (Gale 2013). 172,000 hectares of Tasmanian forest gains WHA listing (Fairman & Keenan 2014).

2014	The Forestry (Rebuilding the Forest Industry) Act is implemented by Hodgman Government, effectively dismantling the TFA (Warman 2014). The UNESCO World Heritage Committee unanimously rejects a State and Federal Government proposal to de-list 74,000 hectares of recently extended WHA forest (Fairman & Keenan 2014).
2014-2016	The Hodgman's State Government introduce controversial anti-protest laws. High-profile environmentalist and former senator Bob Brown is arrested at the Lapoinya logging site. After his charges are dropped, Brown pledges to challenge the laws in the High Court (O'Connor 2016).
2017	The State Liberal Government unsuccessfully pledges to reverse a logging moratorium on 396,000 hectares of native forest. The legislation is blocked by parliamentarians, a move welcomed by environmentalist and industry groups alike (Morton 2018c). Australian High Court finds the State Government's anti-protest laws unconstitutional (Morton 2018b).
2018	Thousands protest against the proposed kunanyi cable car (Ross 2018).

Appendix Two

The following table is a non-exhaustive but representational overview of the social sciences (particularly sociological) literature explicitly engaging with ontological security. It does not include environmental social science literature. The body of the thesis (Chapter 2) identifies and discusses a number of these environmentally-themed texts.

Area	Literature	Description
Housing and home	Saunders (1989) Dupuis and Thorns (1998) Kearns et al. (2000) Hiscock et al. (2001) Mee (2007) Hulse and Saugeres (2008) Newton (2008) Colic-Peisker and Johnson (2010; Dupuis (2012) Gibson et al. (2012) McCormack (2012) Murphy and Levy (2012) Rosenberg (2012) Kirkman et al. (2015) Woodhall-Melnik et al. (2017)	Social science literature engaging with ontological security as a condition or result of various forms of housing tenure and experiences of 'home'.
Migration, diaspora, and travel	Noble (2005) Perry (2007) Walkerdine (2010) Skey (2010; 2011) Harney (2012) Chase (2013) Taylor (2013) Fozdar and Hartley (2014)	Social science literature engaging with ontological security as an aspect of experiences of migration and diaspora, including the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers.

	Hickey (2015) Nunn et al. (2016) Vaquera et al. (2017) Bondi (2014) [human geography] Shani 2017 [postcolonialism]	
Media and communications	Silverstone (1993) Cohen and Metzger (1998) Ostertag (2010) Reifova and Fišerová (2012) Dzięglewski (2016) Zhukova (2016)	Social science literature engaging with ontological security as implicated in media and communications, including media production and individual media consumption.
Health	Crossley (2003) Gregory (2005) Rämgård (2006) Larkin et al. (2007) Danermark and Möller (2008) Chan et al. (2010) Broom and Kirby (2013) Mansvelt et al. (2014) Cook et al. (2015) Armstrong-Hough (2015) Malcolm et al. (2017)	Social science literature engaging with ontological security as implicated in the process of health risks, and the experience of precarious health.
Gender and sexuality	Dame (2016) Markowitz and Puchner (2016)	Social science literature engaging with ontological security as implicated in the construction and experience of gender and sexuality.

Anthropology	Eickelkamp (2013) Douny (2014) Elkholy (2016)	Anthropological literature engaging with ontological security.
International relations and political psychology	Kinnvall (2004) Mitzen (2006) Steele (2008) Innes (2017)	International relations and political psychology literature engaging with ontological security.
Transport	Hiscock et al. (2002) Kent (2016)	Social science literature engaging with ontological security as implicated in the use of public and private transport.
Tourism	Wickens (2002) Backhaus (2006)	Social science literature engaging with ontological security as implicated in experiences of tourism.
'Intersections'	Seale (1996) Nettleton and Burrows (1998) Georgiou (2013)	Social science literature which sits at the 'intersection' of study areas; e.g. aging, health, and home (Seale 1996); health and homeownership (Nettleton and Burrows 1998); migration and media (Georgiou 2013).

Appendix Three

Figure 1. Recruitment poster used to advertise the research to potential participants. The original poster included tear-off portions with my personal contact number.

Thank you very much for your participation – I hope you enjoyed the interview.
You are also invited to contribute material online to a repository (and given sufficient responses, this material will then be uploaded to a dedicated website). All submissions will be anonymous.

Your submission should answer the prompt:
"what represents 'Tasmanian forests' to you?"

Material can be in different formats – visual, audio, or written – and can be created by you, or sourced from elsewhere.

Please email any contributions to **Rebecca.Banham@utas.edu.au**

Thank you.

Figure 2. Prompt given to participants post-interview, inviting them to contribute materials that they felt represent Tasmanian forests.

Appendix Four

This appendix contains the information sheet (1) and consent form (2) provided to all participants prior to the commencement of interviews.

Seeing the Forests for the Trees: Ontological Security and Tasmanians' Experiences of Forests'

This information sheet is designed for people who are interested in participating in the above study.

1. Invitation

You are invited to participate in a study that is being conducted as part of Rebecca Banham's PhD research. The research is being supervised by Professors Bruce Tranter, Douglas Ezzy, and Libby Lester from the School of Social Sciences at the University of Tasmania.

2. What is the purpose of this study?

The aim of this research is to gather information on the thoughts of Tasmanian residents about the state's forests. We are interested in the experiences that Tasmanians have had in and around forests, and their opinions about forest issues. We are particularly interested in the memories, feelings and activities that Tasmanians associate with forests.

3. Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate as a Tasmanian resident, who has self-identified as someone who is interested in, or cares about forests and forest issues.

Someone may have passed on the details of this research to you, as they believe that you may be interested in participating. All participants involved in this study have personally contacted the researcher, as we do not have prior access to participants' contact details.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There will be no consequences if you decide not to participate.

4. What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview. In the interview, you will be asked questions about experiences you have had in and around forests, and issues related to forests. Questions you will be asked may include topics such as visits you have made to forests, your thoughts about environmental issues, and recreational or occupational experiences you have had that are relevant to forests.

The interview will take place in a public setting that we both agree upon, and is expected to take no more than an hour (possibly less). The interview will be audio recorded, and you will be informed when the recording is taking place.
You will not be identifiable in the data, as pseudonyms will always be used for all participants in the study.
You will also be invited to contribute material to a website. The website is designed to illustrate the visual, literary and other material that people associate with Tasmanian forests.
Contributions to the website are completely voluntary, and may be linked to your anonymous interview data.
Your contribution to this website will be anonymous. If you are interested in contributing to and/or accessing the website, further information and instructions will be provided at the end of your interview.

5. Are there any possible benefits from participation in this study?

Your responses about Tasmanian forests will be used to help examine the role of experiences, emotions and identity relating to how people understand environmental issues. This is an important topic on both a global, and local scale. If you are interested in these topics, you may also find it quite enjoyable or cathartic to contribute to this research by telling your story.
To say thank you for contributing your time to this study, all participants will be given a $25 giftcard.

6. Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?

While you may be asked questions about your experiences, memories and emotions, we do not foresee any potential risks for participants. If there any questions or topics you do not wish to discuss, there are no consequences if you decline to answer.

7. What if I change my mind during or after the study?

You are free to withdraw your participation without explanation during the study.
Please be aware that if you change your mind after August 31 2017, your data cannot be removed from the study. Due to the nature of the internet, if you choose to contribute to the website please be aware that uploaded information may not be possible to remove.

8. What will happen to the information when this study is over?

Data from the interviews will be kept for five years after the completion of the study. Transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet on University of Tasmania premises. After this time all raw data will be destroyed, unless you give permission for your data to be anonymously archived for use in future projects. You can give your permission for this on the consent form that the researcher will give to you.
All data will be handled in a confidential manner, and your answers will not be identifiable as your own.

9. How will the results of the study be published?

Participants' interview responses will be included in Rebecca Banham's PhD thesis, and potentially used in related presentations and publications for journals and/or conferences. Participants' contributions to the website will be publicly viewable upon submission of a sufficient number of responses.
You will not be identifiable as a participant in any publication or discussion of results, regardless of format.

If you would like to view a copy of the study's findings, this can be emailed upon request. Please contact Rebecca.Banham@utas.edu.au to organise this.

10. What if I have questions about this study?

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the researchers through the details below:

Rebecca Banham
Rebecca.Banham@utas.edu.au
+61 3 6226 2331

Bruce Tranter
Bruce.Tranter@utas.edu.au
+61 3 6226 2362

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on +61 3 6226 6254 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. Please quote ethics reference number H0016076.

This information form is yours to keep. To participate in this study, you will be need to sign a written consent form, which will be provided to you by the researchers.

‘Seeing the Forests for the Trees: Ontological Security and Tasmanians’ Experiences of Forest Areas’

This consent form is designed for people who are interested in participating in the above study.

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.
2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
4. I understand that the study involves a one-to-one interview of around an hour or less. This interview will be audio recorded. I also understand that I will be given the opportunity to anonymously contribute to a repository, which may become a dedicated website.
5. I understand that participation involves no foreseeable risks, and that I am free to decline topics that I do not wish to discuss.
6. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania’s Sandy Bay premises for five years from the publication of the study results, and will then be destroyed unless I give permission for my data to be stored in an archive.

   I agree to have my study data archived.

   Yes ☐ No ☐
7. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
8. I understand that the researcher(s) will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply to the researcher(s) will be used only for the purposes of the research. I also understand that due to the nature of the internet, any material uploaded to the website may not be possible to remove.
9. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant.
10. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any effect.

    If I so wish, until 31st August 2017 I may request that any data I have supplied be withdrawn from the research.

Participant's name: _____

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Statement by Investigator

I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked. ☐

The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Investigator's name: _____

Investigator's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix Five

The following documents are the interview guide, featuring annotations I made by hand over the course of conducting fieldwork (1); my original work mapping the codes and themes that I anticipated finding in the interview data (2); and the table that I subsequently developed, summarising the codes and themes that guided the early drafts of the findings chapters.

Emotion
Routine
Self-narrative

Vulnerability
Anxiety
Home
Stability
Existence, being

What brought you here today? Who are you in relation to forests?
What does 'forest' mean to you?
Tell me about **your home** – where is home? Does enviro. factor in?
(Were you born in) How long have you lived in Tasmania?

What do you do in forests?
Work
Bushwalking/camping

Can you tell me about **past experiences** you have had in Tasmania's forests? (connection, identity)
Memory, childhood/past
Special places
Leisure, work
values - why do these experiences matter?
Why is it important to you?

Routine & ritual

What emotions do you associate with being in a forest?

What **environmental activities** do you do (possibly outside forests)?
Recycling, 'green' behaviours
Gardening
Activism
values
→ relate back to forests

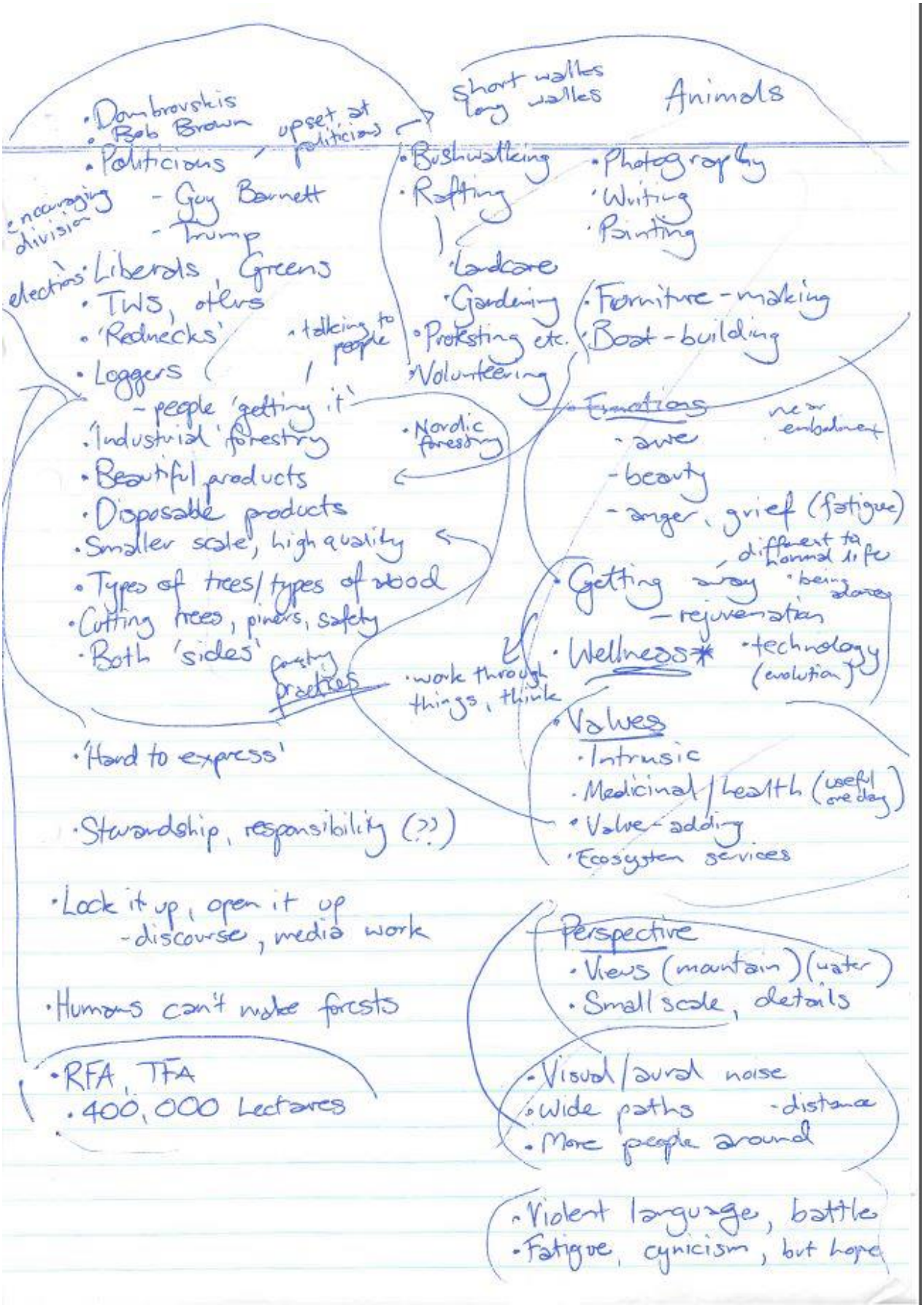
Where do you hear and talk about forests?
Routine?
Self-narrative
News, newspapers
Social media
Groups, clubs, friends
What is the message?
Images

Are there any enviro. issues that concern you?
What do you think about **forestry and conservation** (in Tasmania)? Future aspirations?
Have these opinions changed?
Could your mind change? How?
Existence & continuity

Anything else to add?

Esp. climate change
– does conservation matter in a precarious (doomed) world?


Materiality (time & place)
Routine
Privacy/authenticity
Self-narrative
Ontology
Vulnerability
CODING
Understanding
Media
Tle Mercury + newspapers
ABC, radio
Advocate etc.
Facebook (passive, echo chamber)
TWS etc.
Moving to Tassie
Tas Times
how Tas used to be
Experience
Places
Tas
Aus
National parks
WHA
Overland Track
Contact with forests
Mountains
Pedder/Franklin
Urban/interface
Distance, access
visitors
special, possessive
home
connection
International (Nordic)
Wellington
boundary
Returning to places
Concerns
plastic, waste, consumption
climate change
maine (salmon)
defrestation
lungs of the earth, oxygen
carbon sequestration
Specialty timbers
Bee-keeping
help forests
GBR
Embodied experience
silence
clear air/breathing
injuries/age (used to walk more)
Preparation
routine
Taking your time
Narratives
hope, future
cynicism, pessimism
does it still matter?
Family
Childhood
taking down
Seasons change
Time scales
journey, not destination
Grandchildren
feeling small
'ancient forests'
Forestry Tas ($$, corrupt)
Practices
'Outdated'
woodchips, clearfell burning, poison
log trucks
need for industry roads
Going back from January 2016
Fire, bushfires
Evolution
Survival
Indigenous
Predictability
Colonialism
how it looked
Science
Latin names, species
Reading, subscriptions, learning
'Interesting', 'fascinating'
'Natural' 'back then'
untouched, pristine
'as it should be'
wild, wilderness
intact, unspoilt
Habitat
Animals
Plants
Fungi
Orchids
Fagus
Interdependence, ecosystems
'Sclerophyll'
Gondwana
Hard to define forests
Old-growth
Plantations
monoculture
crop
Forest types (sclerophyll, wet, heath)
Extinction


Dombrovskis
Bob Brown
Politicians
upset at politicians
encouraging division
- Guy Barnett
- Trump
elections
Liberals, Greens
TWS, others
'Rednecks'
Loggers
talking to people
- people 'getting it'
'Industrial' forestry
Nordic forestry
Beautiful products
Disposable products
Smaller scale, high quality
Types of trees/types of wood
Cutting trees, pines, safety
Both 'sides'
forestry practices
'Hard to express'
Stewardship, responsibility (??)
Lock it up, open it up
- discourse, media work
Humans can't make forests
RFA, TFA
400,000 hectares
short walks
long walks
Animals
Bushwalking
Rafting
Photography
Writing
Painting
Landcare
Gardening
Protesting etc.
Volunteering
Furniture-making
Boat-building
Emotions
new embodiment
- awe
- beauty
- anger, grief (fatigue)
- different to normal life
Getting away
- being alone
- rejuvenation
Wellness*
technology (evolution)
work through things, think
Values
Intrinsic
Medicinal/health (useful one day)
Value-adding
Ecosystem services
Perspective
Views (mountain) (water)
Small scale, details
Visual/aural noise
Wide paths
- distance
More people around
Violent language, battle
Fatigue, cynicism, but hope

Theme	Codes (examples)
Media	Newspapers ABC (TV/Radio) Passive engagement
Environmental concerns	Forest conservation Climate change Sustainability Extinction and loss
Forestry: Practices	Economics/management Clearfelling/woodchipping, plantations Benefits of industry
Forestry: Politics	Long-term/historical problems Politicians Conflict
Epistemology	Understandings (of forest) Knowledge and education Definitions
Naturalness	Management/regeneration Nature/'natural' Wilderness, 'pristine', 'untouched'
Place	Tasmania (sites) and Tasmania (as place) Access Boundaries
Values	Habitat values Intrinsic values Rarity
Being in the forest	Embodiment and emotion Routines Immersion
Time	Future Time scales Self-narrative
Wellbeing	Time away (from normal life) Biophilia/Nature as 'healthy' Reliance on environment
Ontology	Part of something Evolution Survival and life
Relationship with non-human	Importance Call and response Connection to the non-human Defending the non-human
Activities	Bushwalking Water activities Creative activities
Narratives and discourse	'Locked up'/'opened up' Articulating experiences
Other	Indigenous/Colonial Empowerment/self-reliance Methodology